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BISHOPS ECONOMICS POLITICS

CRITICS' CHOICES FOR CHRISTMAS: JANE HOWARD • WILLIAM F. MAY • RUSSELL McCORMMACH • JOHN CALVIN BATCHELOR • MARIE PONSOT • IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ • ELIZABETH SHANNON • EVELYN EATON WHITEHEAD • RICHARD E. HAGE • MARGARET R. MILES

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Correspondence

The literary Merton

Trappist, Ky.

To the Editors: Although I am in basic agreement with William Shannon's assessment of Michael Mott's monumental biography, *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton,* which appeared in the October 19th issue, I would like to point out a factual error in the opening paragraph of the review. It is stated there that "the first dissertation on Merton's writings appeared the year before his death." According to an updated list provided by the Merton Studies Center of Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky, of the ninety works listed, eleven were published prior to 1968, the year of Merton's death. The earliest doctoral dissertation was defended by Sister Susan Campbell on "The Poetry of Thomas Merton: A Study in Theory, Influences, and Form" at Stanford University in 1954.

It is significant that most of these early studies concentrate on Merton as a literary figure. What needs to be done now is a comprehensive study of the entire Merton corpus, especially in reference to the experimental poetry and literary criticism of his last years. This can safely be done since New Directions has published *The Collected Poems* and *The Literary Essays* during the past decade. The Mott biography which deals directly with these latter works opens the door for further exploration in this area of Merton studies.

(BROTHER) PATRICK HART

A case for ACTU

Nahant, Mass.

To the Editors: Certainly no priest, during the thirties and forties, spent more time and energy working and fighting on behalf of both organized and unorganized labor than did Msgr. Charles Owen Rice. He was also active in the campaign to free the United Electrical Workers, CIO, from Communist domination, and it is this activity, or some aspect of it, that now causes him feelings of guilt and regret, expressed in his review of Ronald Schatz's *The Electrical Workers* [Aug. 10, 1984].

Father Rice has every right to judge his own past activities as he chooses, including his activities in the struggle of the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) to build unions that would be free of Stalinist, as well as of either employer or racketeer, control. As someone who helped edit ACTU's national publication, *The Labor Leader,* and was involved with that organization from the thirties through the fifties, I can share Father Rice's regret that we were not more Christian, rising more successfully above the "nastiness and bitterness" injected by the UE Stalinists in that struggle, as Father Rice puts it. What true Christian hsa not had such regrets?

It is another thing altogether, however, to give even partial credence to falsehoods about ACTU people who, on balance, did a perfectly honest job of fighting for independent trade unions that would effectively represent American workers.

Father Rice writes, "My deepest regret is that we did not defend [the Communists'] civil rights in the final crunch, let McCarthyites have their will of them." That is simply not an accurate statement as far as the national ACTU is concerned or the two most active chapters (New York and Detroit). I could cite chapter and verse from *The Labor Leader,* until *Commonweal*'s columns were filled and its readers anesthetized, all of my citations demonstrating a record of defense of the Communists' civil rights extending over nine years of the Cold War and McCarthyite hysteria. But by "the final crunch," does Father Rice mean the expulsion of Stalinist unions from the CIO in 1949-50, before the McCarthy era? True, all of us in ACTU supported that. It was done not by McCarthyites but anti-McCarthyites like Philip Murray and Walter Reuther, two of the finest labor leaders America has yet produced. The claim by several Stalinist unions that their civil rights were violated was rejected by a U.S. District Court.

Father Rice's review appears to second Schatz's unfavorable treatment of ACTU. I will concede that Schatz is an able historian and most of the time is fairly accurate, especially compared to Douglas Seaton, whose book about ACTU I reviewed in *Commonweal* a year earlier [Aug. 12, 1983]. Unfortunately, Schatz joins with Seaton in pushing the same charge that ACTU's primary interest in the labor movement was removing Communist leadership. Schatz's slurs against ACTU are smoother and more plausible than Seaton's but, given space enough, I think I could document their inaccuracy to the satisfaction of this journal's readers. Even more significant, however, may be Schatz's inaccuracies about Communist trade-union practice, inaccuracies that bear directly on his regret at the downfall of the Stalinist UE and his animus against ACTU for its part in that downfall.

Father Rice concludes, "It is ironic that the Communists who lost on the field of battle bid fair to win the battle of the books." He notes that his "archives" are open to any interested scholar who might want to present a more complete picture. I might add that so are mine, though no scholar or publisher, secular or Catholic, has shown much interest. Both the New York and Boston public libraries have full sets of *The Labor Leader* and *The Wage Earner* (Detroit ACTU paper) on microfilm. The material is there. The facts are there. Perhaps some day the wind of intellectual fashion will veer sufficiently to move some yet unborn scholar to assemble them, and some yet unknown publisher to print them.

JOHN C. CORT

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mi. 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Copyright © 1984 Commonweal Foundation.

Illustrations: p. 649, Mitro *TaNea,* Greece; p. 650, Emil Antonucci; p. 651, Brina, Rothco; p. 652 Schwadron, *Punch*; p. 655, Bas., *Tachydromos*, Greece; p. 661, Salo, Rothco.

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Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas-New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. Telephone: (212) MU 3-2042. Single copy, $1.25. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $24; Canada, $26; foreign, $29. Special two-year rate: U.S., $43; Canada, $47; foreign, $53. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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SHORTCHANGING THE PASTORAL

THE BISHOPS HAVE SPOKEN the right word at the right time. The draft pastoral letter on the American economy is actually modest in scope but uncompromising in stance. It does not pass any final judgment on capitalism or even attempt a full-scale analysis of the nation's economic system. It does not reveal that economy's inner contradictions, as radical critics might have hoped, nor does it celebrate the springs of that economy's successes, as enthusiastic boosters have urged. It is concerned with performance more than structures. It measures that performance by standards which some might find obvious and unassailable but are nonetheless quite different from those by which our economy is daily judged: human dignity; the opportunity of all, and especially the poor, to participate in the life of the community; an equitable distribution of goods; the enormous impact of our economy on the well-being of less developed nations.

The bishops' draft has been welcomed in many quarters. "The bishops do not pull their punches on what they believe is right," wrote *New York Times* economics columnist Leonard Silk. "Even before the letter has been adopted by the council of bishops, it is having a powerful effect on the national economic debate, shifting the burden of responsibility for further cuts in social spending to those who advocate such cuts." Silk has already observed that "many will seek to dismiss the bishops' report as sentimental or ideological. Economics, however, can never be wholly value-free, and the question is whether the bishops' letter makes sense as a prescription for a more humane set of policies. Many economists will answer this question affirmatively, holding that the bishops have brought together competent economic analysis and a clear-eyed view of actual conditions in the United States and other countries. They will applaud the bishops for hitting so hard and challenging the nation to rethink its policies in the name of the well-being of all people."

This sense that the bishops' letter helps restore some needed balance to the political-economic debate in the wake of Mr. Reagan's landslide was not expressed only by liberals. The *New York Daily News,* while disagreeing with the bishops on several points, called their letter a "remarkable document . . . a sermon that enriches the American consideration of economics *and* morality." David Gergen, former Reagan administration press official, wrote in a syndicated column for the *Los Angeles Times* that "the bishops have spoken up at exactly the right time and in the right way: at a moment when the nation is about to make crucial economic decisions, the bishops have said we must focus once again on the rising tide of poverty."

Not all the reaction was so favorable. Unfortunately, too much of the criticism encountered by the bishops has been of distinctly poor quality, what Gergen does not hesitate to call "a caterwauling among otherwise thoughtful observers that is dismaying if not disheartening." The preemptive letter issued by a group of prominent Catholics was perhaps all too revealing an example of the kind of

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entrepreneurship they praised so highly. Although they invested $100,000 to hold hearings like the bishops', their final document owed far more to the recent writings (mostly available in paperback) of Michael Novak than to anything else. One might question whether these executives had gotten their money's worth. As for truth in advertising, the letter was accompanied by a press release claiming that its organizers had sought out "a representative group of lay Catholics." Apparently, it was merely coincidence that the group consisted almost entirely of corporation executives and political activists linked to the Reagan administration.

Some of the major points made by this "lay commission" could well be incorporated or emphasized in the bishops' letter. But the commission's own document is itself so bent on wrapping the U.S. economy in the nation's distinct *political* accomplishments and on proving that, would you believe it, our economy works better than the economies of Argentina, Tanzania, and Poland, that it provides little guidance to the problems America faces in the eighties.

Other criticism was yet further off target. Writing under his own name in the *Washington Post,* Novak directly distorts the bishops' letter, claiming that it calls for federal government limits on personal income and wealth, that it finds recent job creation in the U.S. to be morally unacceptable, and that it is "whiney" in tone. Norman Podhoretz took the same tack — exaggerating the bishops' proposals in order to more easily dismiss them. If these responses were tendentious, George F. Will was supercilious. The bishops, he wrote, believe "there are no intellectual difficulties, no insoluble problems; there are only shortages of good will." The bishops "hurl clichés," are guilty of "childlike innocence," commit "sloppy writing," "confuse exhortation with argument," and "never entertain a doubt about government programs." Mr. Will is demonstrably wrong on many of these particulars; more to the point, he seems to toss out more than a few clichés himself, trading heavily on the handy stereotype of clerics as preachy naifs. The quality of Mr. Will's own argument can be seen from his conclusion that since the bishops morally censure the present distribution of wealth in America, they are morally condemning "the most successful society the world has known." George Will is too good a thinker not to know the difference between condemning a part and condemning the whole. Perhaps the bishops are a topic not worthy of elementary logical distinctions.

What strikes us about so many of these reactions is their air of unearned knowingness. William F. Buckley, Jr. has read last week's book on the poverty problem and he is certain that the bishops have not. The evidence is quite otherwise. The text, the footnotes, and the hearings undertaken by Archbishop Weakland's committee all suggest that the bishops have reached their conclusions in full awareness of the complexities of employment policy, poverty programs, and income distribution. They have been fully exposed to all the currents of opinion in favor of shifting resources to the "productive" and cutting back government assistance to the unemployed and the poor. If they have spoken strongly, there is every sign they have done so after deliberation. The truth is that many of the critics who dismiss the bishops as trapped within a set of uncritically adopted clichés, are themselves walled up behind a set of unexamined assumptions. Their attitude of economic knowingness is only part of their defenseworks. It is amusing to see individuals who are silent about J. Peter Grace's dubious claims of government "waste," about the president's fantasies concerning the deficit, and about the hocus-pocus of Laffer curves now cavil at the bishops' lack of economic seriousness.

Consider one of the bishops' most controversial points. They argue not only in favor of a minimal provision for the needy, but they add that our society's *disparities* in income and wealth are morally unacceptable. This, we are told, is bad economics. Economic growth — and therefore the well-being of the needy — is dependent on those disparities. But of course it is not. Other capitalist economies outperform ours in many respects, and yet feature far more equitable distributions of income. One can argue that that maldistribution skews the markets that economists prize so highly and creates all kinds of inefficiencies. It also skews political power and regularly derails even the most widely accepted government efforts to guide or cushion the marketplace. Those who have read a little economics may shrug off the bishops' concern with equitable income distribution as moral naïveté; those who have studied a little more economics are likely to give the bishops a serious hearing.

None of this is to imply that the draft pastoral cannot be improved. It can and will be. It allows plenty of room for pluralism in the church, for dissent and debate. In fact, its most important immediate impact may be to open up a space in the present climate of opinion where alternatives to Reaganism and Thatcherism can get a hearing. What faces this society as its economy undergoes major changes is not the question of leveling capitalism for some state-directed monolith. It is the question of whether the creativity we prize in regard to material products can also be applied to social and economic institutions — or whether we have abandoned that creativity somewhere in America's past.

CHURCH & STATE (CONT.)

The election debate over religion and politics was sometimes silly, sometimes scarey, sometimes substantial. It will be a while before observers sort out how much of each. Meanwhile, it is important that the discussion not end with the first Tuesday in November.

One of the controversial points in that discussion was abortion. This journal has long argued that abortion was not a religious issue, not, that is, in the specific sense that opposition to abortion was "a religious 'doctrine' of a single church or

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THE FAIRNESS FRONT

NOVEMBER WAS NOT ARMAGEDDON

AFTER WEEKS of dreading that election day might bring a death blow to politicians (of both parties) with good records on the "fairness" issues, November 6 has come and gone and things don't look so terrible. Mr. Reagan was able to do a lot of damage in his first term, but second term or first, he cannot impose his views by fiat; for most of what he wants to do he'll need the support of the Congress, and there the news is surprisingly good.

It isn't just that the choices made November 6 were relatively less bad than might have been. A CBS exit poll found support for increased federal spending "to aid the poor." And, an electorate that was supposedly going for greed in a big way, elected and re-elected members of both parties with strong public records in favor of civil rights, social justice, and programs for poor people.

There will be seven new senators, only one of whom has a record of support for the president's tax, budget, and other social policies, and that's Phil Gramm of Texas. The Gramm election, like John Kerry's in Massachusetts and Jay Rockefeller's in West Virginia, probably represents no real change because in each case they are much like their predecessors. That may also prove to be the case with Mitch McConnell, the newly-elected moderate Republican from Kentucky who beat Walter Huddleston — not for his votes on social issues, but for votes he missed. The other new senators: Gore of Tennessee, Simon of Illinois, and Harkin of Iowa, have good records on social issues and (particularly in the case of Harkin) replace incumbents with less favorable records. Since all have been in Congress, their pro-fairness positions were a matter of public record.

The House of Representatives is a more complicated matter, but there too, the election was not a rout for the fairness crowd. As in other years, incumbents tended to be reelected, including those with strong positive records on civil rights and poor people's programs. Overall, the Republicans gained only fourteen seats, and the ideological mix is thought to have changed little. The president's coattails were so short that Bob Michel, Republican leader in the House of Representatives, called the president "a son of a buck" for his selfish focus on a big personal win and an unwillingness to work for state and local candidates. As Michel and other House members from both parties quickly grasped, that leaves them without a coalition in place to finish the Reagan agenda.

The result in the U.S. Senate was a net plus, and in the House of Representatives virtually no change, except that liberals and moderates of both parties sound more inclined to stand up to the lame-duck president. For people on the fairness front lines, November 6 was not Armageddon.

So it is not all bleak, as some feared, but the real challenge posed by the election is to us. Budget Director Stockman is readying the next round of budget cuts and policy changes, and the assault will not be held off by any abstract numerical edge. Voting against the president, while the networks' election-night maps remain vivid in people's minds, will take considerable courage — and strong evidence of suppport from the voters back home. The make-up of the Congress holds out the promise of real progress on the fairness front, but realizing that promise will depend on the willingness of the politics-weary to stay involved.

NANCY AMIDEI

(Nancy Amidei is the former director of the Food Research and Action Center in Washington, D.C., and has just been awarded the Kenny and Marianne Rogers 1984 World Hunger Media Award.)

several churches being imposed on those of other persuasions in violation of the First Amendment" ("Religion & Politics: Clearing the Air," Sept. 7).

On page 655 of this issue, Arthur Hertzberg challenges not only our view on this question but the whole natural law framework which supports much of the Catholic church's — and not only the church's — approach to linking morality and public policy. Rabbi Hertzberg has labored long and constructively in the fields of religion and public policy; he has an excess of personal credentials to qualify for a hearing on this matter. But it is also true that, particularly as regards abortion, his views are representative of a wide body of opinion.

For these reasons, we welcome this article (as well as the author's willingness to state his position on an admittedly complex matter in so brief and direct a fashion). It is extremely important for Catholics, and for opponents of abortion generally, to recognize the incredulity which their claim not to be imposing "religious" beliefs provokes in many fellow citizens of intelligence and good will. In the final analysis, we continue to disagree with Rabbi Hertzberg. For now, however, we direct our readers' attention to his article and invite their reactions.

GIFTS SEEN & HEARD

On October 16, one day after representatives from the government and warring factions met in La Palma, stirring the slightest embers of hope for some resolution to El Salvador's bloody civil war, the Nobel Committee announced the recipient of its 1984 Peace Prize, fifty-three-year-old Bishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu of South Africa. The *Economist* of London was quick to point out (October 20) that in its view Bishop Tutu is not a peacemaker but simply a "man of good will." Such views were voiced last year in Eastern-bloc publi-

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cations over the selection of Poland's Lech Walesa for the 1983 prize. Similarly, President P.W. Botha's implied affront in not issuing a comment on Bishop Tutu's selection is not without precedent.

Scarcely two weeks before the Nobel announcement, Bishop Tutu had taken part in a ceremony on the feast of St. Francis held at Manhattan's St. Peter's Episcopal Church. He and a small group of fellow Franciscan Tertiaries were renewing their annual promises as members of the Third Order with its special vocation of peacemaking. To a Roman Catholic witness, the startling nature of the ceremony lay not in the fact that both the deacon and sub-deacon at the ceremony were women who fulfilled their duties in the solemn rites with such prayerful completeness, nor the eloquence of the bishop's own homily, but the disarming simplicity with which Bishop Tutu renewed his own promises at the side of this fellow Tertiaries. As they stood in a body before their Franciscan superior, there was a simple, tangible, significant bond among them.

It is no wonder that such a small, energetic, bright man as Bishop Tutu can send tremors through a government. (We have seen a similar phenomenon in Brazil's Dom Helder Camara.) To a government based on apartheid, he makes human barriers seem to dissolve. He displays as well a secret, compressed, inner joy and self-confidence which utterly baffle his powerful opponents. The first black person elected general secretary of the South African Council of Churches and now the first black Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, he has said, "Jesus Christ is involved in the liberation struggle. He liberated us from the bondage of sin — and oppression is an expression of sin." Nor does he save his insights for those at home. To the American business community he said recently: "What we have to say to those who invest in South Africa is that your investment is a moral as well as an economic issue. . . . This is our last peaceful chance. My fears are the fears of so many that we could very well have a blood bath. It is for everyone to speak out — business, bishops, everybody."

Three days after the Nobel selection, the South African government charged Bishop Tutu's Catholic counterpart, Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban, president of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference, with revealing police information. Hurley pled not guilty to the charge, conviction for which could lead to an eight-year sentence, and/or fines of up to $12,000. Archbishop Hurley's trial is to begin in February, and stems from a 1983 news conference at which he released a report on South African troop atrocities against civilians in Namibia. Meanwhile, South Africa has recently experienced the greatest degree of civil unrest since the 1970s, this following the implementation of the new South African constitution in September. According to news agencies, thousands of blacks have been forced from their homes, many have been imprisoned, and 155 have been killed since the first of the year. An American State Department official stated last week that violence does not hold the solution for the complex situation in South Africa. But as Bishop Tutu would point out, neither does the "Quiet Diplomacy" of the United States.

Finally, in light of the attention lavished on recent American pastorals on peace and the economy, we would fail utterly if we did not voice fitting appreciation for the recent pastoral letter of the American black bishops on evangelization: "What We Have Seen and Heard" (St. Anthony Messenger Press). The letter, published in September, is the first of its kind from America's black Catholic bishops, and we hope only the first. In every aspect it is one of good news, full of the strength and deep joy that spring from the unique experience of black Americans.

The letter echoes Paul VI's admonition to the people of Uganda: "You must now give your gifts of blackness to the whole church." These gifts are detailed by the pastoral, and their strengths and variety are evident in the composition of the letter itself. As the bishops state, "we learned to celebrate in the midst of sorrow, to hope in the depths of despair, and to fight for freedom in the face of all obstacles. . . . This is the responsibility that freedom brings: to teach to others its value, and work to see that its benefits are denied to none." Black American Catholics have countless gifts and strengths they are willing to share. But, the pastoral notes, without guidance and support from the church, "the wealth of black giftedness risks being lost." If there is a moment in history when this gift, in the United States as well as in Africa, must *not* be squandered, it is the present.

Norman Thomas centennial

A SOCIALIST WITNESS

GOD, GOODNESS, & QUIET HEROISM

NOVEMBER 20, 1984 marked the one hundredth birthday of Norman Thomas, the six-time presidential candidate of the Socialist party from 1928 to 1948. He lost every race but, in the words of United Auto Workers' president Walter Reuther, was the "unofficial president of the better society that had—and still has—to be created." The *Reader's Digest* declared: "He Never Got Elected. But He Altered Our Government." And, when Norman Thomas died in 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson, whom Thomas criticized on the Vietnam War, said: "With the passing of Norman Thomas, America loses one of its most eloquent speakers, finest writers, and creative thinkers . . . He was a humane and courageous man who lived to see many of the causes he championed become the law of the land."

Born in Marion, Ohio in 1884, Norman Thomas was the son and grandson of Presbyterian ministers. His grandparents were strongly anti-slavery. Following the Civil War his maternal grandfather, Stephen Mattoon, was president of a Presbyterian college for Negroes in Charlotte, North Carolina, now known as Johnson C. Smith University.

Thomas studied for the ministry at Union Theological Seminary. Appalled by the deplorable slum conditions in New

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York City, he became attracted to the social gospel. Before he was ordained, he was too unorthodox for some Presbyterian theologians. The Reverend John Fox questioned Thomas on the historicity of the Virgin Birth and a literal resurrection of the body of Christ. But Thomas satisfied the majority of the presbytery that his doubts did not affect his fundamental faith in basic Christianity.

World War I made it impossible for Thomas to reconcile war and Christianity. God, he felt, was not the "God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ" if his servants could only serve him and the cause of righteousness by the "diabolical" means of war. At the same time, he began to accept the socialist challenge that the war was imperialist on both sides.

Thomas was much moved by the writings of Dr. Walter Rauschenbusch, a Christian Socialist minister, particularly his *Prayers of the Social Awakening*. Thomas still knew little of socialism. He voted for Woodrow Wilson in 1916 to keep America out of war. By the end of 1916 he joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a Christian pacifist group, and the American Union Against Militarism, which in 1920 became the American Civil Liberties Union.

In 1917, Thomas, as an independent, backed Morris Hillquit, the Socialist candidate for mayor of New York, who ran on an anti-war platform. "The hope for the future," Thomas wrote Hillquit, "lies in a new social and economic order which demands the abolition of the capitalistic system. War itself is only the most horrible and dramatic of the many evil fruits of our present organized system of exploitation and the philosophy of life which exalts competition instead of cooperation."

When it became clear to Thomas that his anti-war activities were leading many supporters of his East Harlem parish to withdraw their financial contributions, Thomas resigned so that social work for the poor people in the parish would not suffer.

Thomas became active in the Socialist party, edited the FOR's magazine, *The World Tomorrow*, and, after his nomination for governor of New York in 1924, became a perennial Socialist candidate.

At the same time his views on religion slowly changed. Although he argued that man's wickedness and stupidity, not God's, was responsible for the unhappy world of 1920, he could not help but ask, "Has a God of love no responsibility for the weakness of the men He had made?" Thomas began to lose faith in a God who was at once power and love.

Shortly after World War I, Thomas attended several conferences which led to the creation of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, where those present explained why their religion gave them a greater sense of brotherhood. When Thomas was called upon to speak, he said it was logically and historically untrue that the religious bodies which they represented had been made more tolerant and brotherly by the intensity of their creeds. The Jews, he reminded his audience, were a chosen people in a peculiar sense by the act of God. As for the Catholics, outside the church there was no salvation, even though some who were not Catholic might, under exceptional circumstances, be saved. And each Protestant sect had been inclined in its day to maintain that it provided the exclusive road to heaven. The terrible wars of religion had a certain horrible logic behind them, he said, and tolerance was eventually born of exhaustion and a turning from religious fanaticism rather than a triumph of Christian brotherhood. "Why," asked Thomas, "should believers on this earth be so much kinder to infidels and heretics than their God, who has prepared death and Hell for those not chosen of His grace?" His questions provoked protest but no answer, and Thomas was not invited to further meetings.

As the years went by, and Thomas started to regard churches more and more as fallible man-made institutions, his respect for them rose. While he still felt them dubiously Christian according to the teachings of Christ, he thought they filled a

> I HAVE RUN FIVE times in succession for the Presidency on the Socialist ticket. . . . The difficulty faced by a Socialist candidate . . . is not overt hostility. . . . In my lifetime I have occasionally faced mobs or hostile police. Not, however, in political campaigns, but in free speech tests, strike meetings, or the effort to organize workers or sharecroppers. In literally thousands of meetings in all parts of the United States (many of them street-corner or other outdoor meetings) which I have addressed as candidate for the Presidency or lesser offices, I remember amazingly little actual or potential disorder. More eggs and vegetables were thrown at Wendell Willkie in 1940 than I ever saw in five Presidential campaigns. Sometimes I have thought that more open hostility to what I said would be a better omen for democracy than indifference or a kind of fatalistic attitude summed up in the sentiment: "You're right, but what can we do about it?" . . .
>
> No, the difficulty of Socialist campaigning . . . has been lack of organization and funds to wage a campaign on so immense a scale as the size of the country together with the organizational and financial strength of the major parties requires. . . . I might add that, with notable exceptions, political reporting is very poor in America, especially where minor parties are concerned. I should be given a degree from a school of journalism for educating reporters in the barest elements of economic and political theory. Almost always these reporters are a good sort. They mean to be fair. But . . . there is a general assumption that the people aren't interested in a logical presentation of a political argument. . . . I remember one campaign when even the *New York Times* published the same wisecrack I made four or five times over, although it had very little space to summarize my arguments.
>
> **—Norman Thomas,**
> **"Reflections of an Old Campaigner"**
> *Commonweal*, December 22, 1944

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place of great importance in community life, and brought real help and comfort to their members. Nevertheless, he demitted from the ministry in 1931.

The Sunday after the Japanese surrendered, ending World War II, Thomas wrote in his diary: "Nature rejoices with men. Soon the church bells will ring and the little churches will be crowded with thankful worshippers. I shall not be among them, although all sorts of memories and desires urge me to go . . . Where shall we look but to God, if He be good, now that science has wrested from Him so much of the secret of the force that holds together the atom and the universe?

"Why not, then, church? Because, if God be omnipotent Power, I cannot praise His ordering of this war-cursed world. If He be love, how can I give Him thanks for the triumph of amoral force? Or how can He accept our adoration unless we bring to Him the sacrifice of a humble and contrite heart? And that we shall not offer. Even our prayers will speak of our exultation in power and the pride of our vengeance."

Thomas rejected his earlier, almost automatic faith in a sure and desirable "far off divine event to which the whole creation moves." He conceded that "There is undoubtedly a Power, not ourselves, behind the universe whom or which we may call God. The question is how far He works for righteousness. And that question stands even if one admits—as I do—that there is a goodness in the universe not easily explained without some ultimate."

"The devil of the orthodox," he noted, "must have his moments of profound despair over the virtue and kindness that all man's weakness and cruelty cannot crush. As parish minister, as political leader with many intimate contacts with the labor struggle, as a neighbor among neighbors, I have seen quite too much goodness and quiet heroism and capacity for mutual aid to accept any dogma of total depravity."

Sorrowed by the death of his beloved wife, Violet, in 1947, Thomas wrote again of his deep longing for a belief in life after death: "I covet for myself a faith I cannot have . . . More than I can tell, I wish that I thought such love as mine and Violet's could live not alone in memory and perhaps in influence . . . I suppose—no, I know—the thing to do is to keep on, to enjoy what can be enjoyed, to do the things one certainly believes should be done, and among the uncertain to make the choices which will best give human decency a chance to live and grow. I should like a surer hope."

In his later years, Thomas still used the term God "as a kind of personification of spiritual values in which I do believe and for which the noblest humanism seems to me to lack an equivalent." For, mused Thomas, "I cannot explain the beauty of the earth or the effect upon me of the starry heavens in terms of physics, geology, and astronomy. Still less can I explain by biology or tell how chemical and physical processes are transmuted into Beethoven's music, or Shakespeare's verse, or a mother's love for her child. This I know: I walk in a world sometimes of pain and sorrow but a world of beauty and wonder; that if evil befalls me so does good, often far beyond my conscious desert. Is it wrong for me ever to say, 'Thank God' (when perhaps I should thank Fate or Fortune) or to steady my heart and mind by something akin to prayer? Is this instinctive response denied because I cannot longer confidently affirm the catechism definition of Him as a 'spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being . . .'? I can still say with Tolstoy, 'God is the name of my desire.' "

HARRY FLEISCHMAN

(Harry Fleischman, former national secretary of the Socialist Party, is the author of Norman Thomas: A Biography—1884-1968, *published by Norton. He is currently chairman of the Workers' Defense League.)*

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

THIRD BRANCH, BEST HOPE?

WE'D BETTER PAY ATTENTION TO CONGRESS

IN THE LAST two weeks before the election this year the ritual began once again: the newspapers of the country — and some of the magazines — began endorsing candidates and explaining their choices. In the major metropolitan newspapers this went on day after day. First, there was the announcement of the presidential choice. Then followed the discussion of the pros and cons of the Senate candidates in the area, then the congressional candidates and so on. For the editors of the big metropolitan dailies this can take in a lot of territory; they evidently feel a responsibility to all the citizens within reaching distance of their papers. They discuss, therefore, the qualifications, in their view, of the candidates for the Senate from several states and most of the candidates for the House of Representatives. In populous states and circulation areas the latter can be numerous indeed.

Although these endorsements are not as important to the candidates as they were in the pre-television era, they are often of great importance still to Senate candidates, especially those seeking to unseat an incumbent, and they can make the crucial difference between winning and losing for a House candidate. One has to feel, then, for the candidate who must make what use he can of a one-line recommendation such as "He knows Washington and speaks passionately for the environment" *(New York Times)*. It must be even more frustrating for the incumbent candidate whose capsule characterization may be the only thing that has appeared in the paper about him in his last two years in office.

The virtual wipeout of the members of the House of Representatives in the news columns is one of the interesting phenomena of the past twenty or more years. There was a time when the House

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was much more regularly covered and most newspapers had reporters who were more or less House specialists; they knew the intricacies of its maneuvering, who was who among the effective members, and how they operated. This is no longer true, although, of course, most city newspapers with Washington bureaus keep reasonable track of their local congress persons. It is, however, coverage of the whole House and Senate that is weak, lacking in regularity and scope. That is why there was general national amazement at the caliber of the men on the House committee investigating Watergate when we watched them at work on TV. Could these articulate, well-informed, careful, and temperate men actually be typical members of the House? You could almost hear the nation asking itself this question. For, coupled with the scarcity of coverage, there has been a steady denigration of Congress in the media. The very word is a signal for a lifted eyebrow and a curled lip on the part of the lowliest local newscaster. (Never mind that his or her own qualifications for serving the public consist of the ability to read from a teleprompter and hair that is amenable to the blowdryer.)

Take the spate of commentary on the news talk shows when Congress adjourned this year. A dismal record. The report was unanimous. They hadn't passed this and they hadn't passed that. Reporter Findlay Lewis was almost howled down on one show for venturing to suggest that the number of bills passed was not the real measure of what a Congress had done. "Congress is a deliberative body," he said. He might have made a very good and valuable case if he had been allowed to develop it — but his confreres on the show were too intent on venting their scorn to allow his going into such abstruse matters. I do not make a case for this particular Congress — in many ways its achievement *was* disappointing — but I do not think we the public know enough about it to make informed judgments, and I think this ignorance is dangerous. In the last four years Congress, especially the House, has been the people's bastion of defense in a time when government grows ever more callous and bellicose. To fail to

understand the Congress and its workings can well mean that we will let the strengths of this third branch of government disappear. The trends are already there.

It would take another column — in fact, a long article — to detail the changes which have affected the effectiveness of Congress in the last twenty years. Congress reflects its constituents. Over the years the quality and intelligence of congressmen has generally been at least a cut above the people they represent, but Congress has also been drastically affected by the growth of factionalism in our society. Consider just a few of its divisions: in the House, legislation must pass the scrutiny of the Democratic Study Group, the Black Caucus, the Hispanic Caucus, the Women's Caucus, the Republican "Conservative Opportunity Society," the House Conservative Democratic Forum as well as the regular Democratic and Republican leadership groups. As the strength of the parties has declined and reforms have weakened the power of chairmen and committees, more and more members of Congress are "free-lance" members owing nothing to party or leadership. They have been elected with the help of PAC money, political consultants, and the use of media advertising. Often new members are ideologues, unable and unwilling to take part in the laborious compromises and the give-and-take essential to the crafting of good legislation. Says Robert Michel, the House Republican leader, "It is one thing to be out there on the stump . . . and it's another thing to put something together. Some of the greatest talkers around here couldn't legislate their way out of a paper bag."

In the last four years a loose alliance of Democrats and moderate Republicans has saved the nation from some very bad choices. Although President Reagan backed the resumption of the manufacture of chemical weapons and it was twice voted narrowly by the Senate — both times with the help of a vote cast by Vice-President Bush — the House insisted on eliminating chemical weapons from a defense appropriations bill. The House also prevented further military aid to the *contras* in Nicaragua. The pressure of the whole Congress had a good deal to do with the withdrawal of the Marines from Lebanon, where the purpose of their presence had never been clearly defined, and their dispatch seems, in retrospect, to have been an empty and costly gesture. In 1982 the Congress also forced a realistic beginning of an attack on the deficit by passing a $98.3 billion tax bill. The House resisted the deregulation of the banking industry, whose profligate loans have put the whole economy in jeopardy. We are in debt to Congress.

When the new Congress convenes it will face once again votes on the MX missile and aid to the anti-government rebels in Nicaragua. It will have to face tough decisions on reducing the deficit by raising taxes and cutting defense spending. Responsible decisions will require political courage and wisdom. They will also require legislative skill. Many able members may be as philosophical as Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill who recently quoted his predecessor Speaker Nicholas Longworth in an article in *National Forum* about the latter's ten terms in Congress: "During the whole of that time, we have been attacked, denounced, despised, hunted, harried, blamed, looked down upon, excoriated and flayed. . . . The only way for a congressman to be happy is to realize that he has no chance." But too many others are leaving in discouragement. It would behoove us to pay more attention to Congress and to understand the measure of our dependence on it in the system of balances in our government.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

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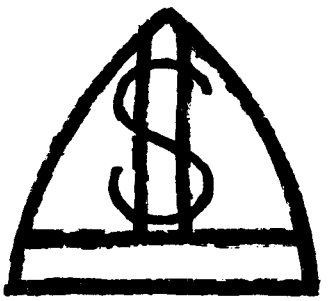
The church & the economy



FOUR RESPONSES TO THE DRAFT OF THE PASTORAL

PAUL STEIDL-MEIER

A reformist document

THE OTHER SHOE has dropped. Following upon their much discussed pastoral on war and the nuclear question, the Catholic bishops have published the first draft of their views on the United States economy. Throughout, their analysis is conducted through the prism of faith, and in light of a preferential option for the poor. Both points deserve comment.

The injunction to read the signs of the times comprises a statement of faith: that God is alive, not dead; that God is present, not as a bystander, but in a way that intimately communicates the loving indwelling of the Trinity with all (John 17). Echoing Tertullian, the bishops affirm that nothing which is human stands outside of the central concern of our communal life in God. There is a dynamic unity between love of God and love of neighbor, and if we say we love God, whom we do not see, while we do not love our neighbor, whom we see, then, quite simply we are liars (1 John 2:9 ff.). To the point, what is happening to our neighbor in social structures and institutions (in this case economic ones) is an intrinsically religious issue.

Why the option for the poor? Quite simply, the plight of the poor represents the most egregious instance of social sin in the political-economic arena today. To be sure, there are other issues; but the poor have a special claim on our concerns because they are so vulnerable and needy.

In this letter the biblical basis of concern as well as the exposition of the reasoning underlying Catholic social thought are both lucidly and cogently presented. For all that, the social teaching of the church remains protean; in the concrete, it can be realized in many diverse shapes and forms. In effect this teaching says: in whatever way you organize yourselves economically, take care that the dignity of all is respected (in terms of participation, meeting human needs, and so forth). It does not say: achieve this by setting up a market system, central planning, or cooperatives. Depending on the cultural setting, the historical background, the realities of power, the level of technology, natural resources, and the demographic characteristics of a region, people must then figure out what to produce, how to do it, for whom, when, where, and so forth.

The American bishops' document is reformist in spirit; it does not issue a sweeping condemnation of market-oriented economies (capitalism) as such, but it does call for significant political and economic changes. Both the radical left as well as conservatives in the church and in society will be less than pleased.

Take markets. Contrary to the suppositions of the radical left, there is no reason in theory why market strategies cannot work. In fact, church teaching historically leans toward democratic market-oriented economies for a number of reasons, including their economic efficiency, as well as the social harm generally caused by power concentrated in the hands of a few. Of course markets often do not work in practice. The reason is that the presuppositions of market theory regarding resource control, market entry, information, and power turn out, in reality, to be violated. Thus the main problem becomes the *quality* of markets, once one recognizes how frequently markets violate their own principles of fairness.

Over against such groups as the Simon-Novak commission, which produced its own "lay letter" on church teachings and the economy, the bishops argue that the *de facto* structure of the U.S. political economy is biased in morally unacceptable ways against the poor, and the vulnerable, and the excluded. The dynamics of the present structures embody a built-in preferential option for the best and the brightest, the privileged, and the powerful, which entails unacceptable consequences for the poor.

Those represented by the Simon-Novak commission have every right, and even a duty, to speak forth on these issues (though one may quarrel with how they have gone about it). Some are tempted to dismiss Michael Novak as the Jacqueline Susann of Catholic social thought, treating important themes in trivial ways and interpreting the positions of others with all

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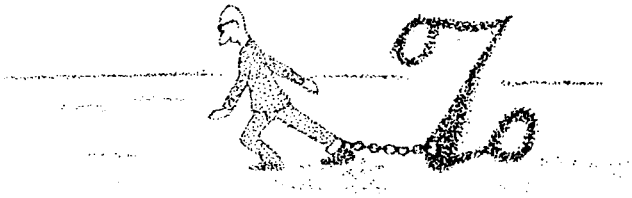
the accuracy of a gossip columnist. But that would be a mistake; Novak does represent an important body of public opinion. Indeed the Simon-Novak commission represents a preferential option for the *status quo*, guided in geopolitical matters by the magisterium of Henry Kissinger and in economic ones by the Business Roundtable. The bishops point out that the *status quo* systematically produces morally unacceptable consequences in terms of joblessness, poverty, social participation, and the international quality of life. In and of itself such a position does not rule out market- and business-based solutions; it simply insists that such strategies be both morally responsible as well as morally responsive.

To borrow from Socrates, the unexamined (economic) life is not worth living. If we opt for what would fundamentally remain a market system, as I would do, it must be guided by morally responsible public choices. For individual or private management decisions have profoundly public effects. Very few, if any, contemporary markets reflect the self-correcting invisible hand of competition. They are beset with externalities and do not automatically respond to need. They offer nothing to those who cannot enter or play by the rules of the game; that is, they do not guarantee participation.

The historical record of our actual market system on child labor, toxic wastes, product safety, energy conservation, price-fixing, income distribution, international cooperation, and so forth has been beset with problems. Historically, in the United States the market has not been self-regulating with respect to social benefits and costs, and people have favored a legal path to reform. Economic justice in a market economy presupposes a legal framework as well as a cultural framework. The quality of each element is absolutely crucial to the proper functioning of the whole system. The bishops compare the rather good record of the United States in political democracy to the nation's historical bias against "economic democracy." The latter notion they articulate in terms of basic, inalienable economic rights and duties. To justify a certain set of economic relations simply because it has produced an impressive amount of wealth is grossly utilitarian and fails to give an adequate account of these inalienable economic rights of all, which are not open to trade-offs (as John Rawls would say), based either on group egoism or utilitarian criteria and achieved with trickle-down mechanisms. The second part of the letter raises more than a hundred policy issues and defies facile summary. The most important points are the questions the bishops raise rather than this or that policy which they may recommend. Perhaps the most far-reaching aspect of the pastoral is the cultural critique it contains of contemporary economic values. The chief obstacle to effective action toward a just economic order is not the lack of empirical knowledge nor of management and technological know-how. Rather it is the effective lack of political will, which is rooted in moral insensitivity, on the one hand, and systematic abuse of power, on the other.



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F. BYRON NAHSER

A needed third question

THE BISHOPS STATE in their first paragraph that the entire discussion on economic life must be shaped by two questions: "What does the economy do *for* people? What does it do *to* people?" There is, in my opinion, a third question which is at least as important, if not more so: "What do *people* do to the economy?"

This is not a facile turn of a phrase, but a simple realization that the economy produces goods which are *bought*. To overlook this key point is to miss exactly one-half of the economic equation: consumption.

To say it another way, while the bishops study closely the role of people as producers and workers, it is at least as vital to study their role as consumers. There are references in the bishops' letter to greed, avarice, and materialism as bad motives of consumption; but analysis of consumption in specific and constructive terms is sorely lacking.

(As an advertising and marketing practitioner, I want to make clear that my concern with purchasing power is an addition to the pastoral letter, which I found otherwise brilliant and inspiring.)

The logic of this brief comment runs something like this: In order to help themselves, the poor need to work. In order to create more work, we must raise consumption. However, of course, the question then is: What products and services are produced, and what impact does the consumption of these have on our society?

This analysis would not only complete the economic cycle — it would answer a vital concern stated by the bishops at the close of their letter (pp. 106-107): The Christian perspective on the meaning of economic life as whole and holy is not well known in our country today. Therefore, it will be difficult, in their opinion, to transform the lives of individuals and our culture as a whole — especially among two significant groups of people.

There are those who may be quite religious, but who see no connection between the domain of work and of economic life and the basically spiritual perspective of a just society. And the second group is made up of those who do raise questions, but feel overwhelmed and helpless in the face of a complex economy.

An analysis of consumption can make linkages so these two groups as *consumers* can see how their purchases are powerful

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leverage points to help change society. The reason, simply, is that products are made by organizations. And when we buy products, we are *rewarding* certain organizations.

The bishops talk a great deal about encouraging organizations to do better in employee relations and the production of worthwhile products. But they don't encourage consumers to *buy* the products of those companies. That is the critical, missing element in the bishops' economic equation.

As consumers, we can and do reward those industries which we believe fulfill our requirements, and punish those which do not. We Americans did it with a vengeance to the U.S. automobile industry — reducing their share of the market in recent years by three million vehicles annually, buying instead better-made Japanese products.

A trivial example is the one product mentioned in the entire 112 pages of the pastoral which Americans consume: cut flowers from Colombia — grown on land taken away from the poor (p. 92). This modest example shows how little consciousness Americans have of the impact of their buying. What dinner party hostess gives a thought as to where the roses on her table come from?

More important examples where consumption patterns have been questioned are in nuclear energy, infant formula, and produce harvested by migrant workers.

One critical element in the consumption equation needs to be addressed: cost. If a company does good for employees — job-training, lifetime employment — uses more ecologically benign processes, etc., the costs usually go up and profits go down. . . . at least for the short term. (Some companies, however — the Japanese particularly — feel that enlightened policies actually reduce costs and improve quality!)

Consumers are not usually anxious to pay more for a product when a similar one costs less. However, as the bishops point out, Americans are decent and want to do good. If they understood the added cost of a product is due to a company's enlightened policies, then they might be persuaded to buy such products over those of a less enlightened — and less costly — competitor. We in marketing know that consumers will pay more for a product with more perceived value — a product in a fancy package or a product with a designer label. Americans would, if they knew, buy products/brands with more substantial "socially added" value.

The same "socially added" value concept may, and has, attracted concerned investors to progressive companies as well.

St. Benedict stated most originally, succinctly, and inspirationally the meaning and dignity of work when he said: "To work is to pray." Is it possible to build a theology of consumption guided by persuasion and education, not policy and legislation?

I urge the bishops to apply their compassion and erudition to the task. Could we ever overcome all the obvious stumbling blocks and qualifications necessary to arrive at a profound and spiritual meaning of the statement: "To consume is to pray"?

Now — after all the derisive laughter has subsided — perhaps we could reflect on it. Comments on consumption — based on the *free* expression of how we spend our time and money — need a section of their own in the final pastoral letter.

There is a call in the letter to a more simple and just lifestyle, but it needs to be developed and analyzed with the same care, energy, and creativity as was devoted to the other subjects. Without it, the picture is neither whole nor holy.

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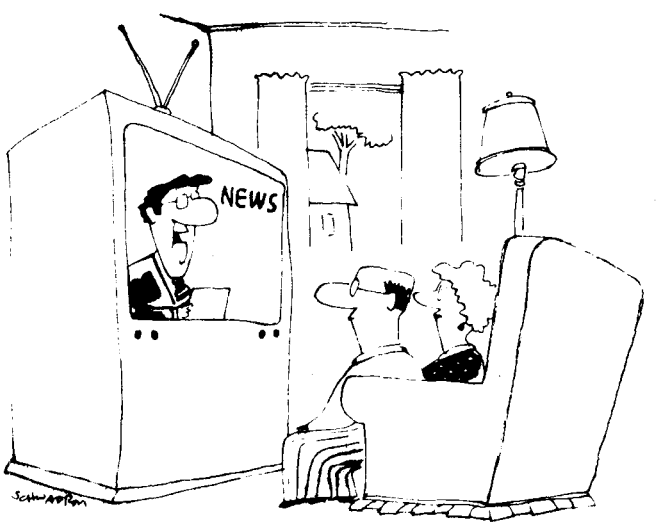
RACHEL A. WILLIS

For a democratic economy

MANY ANTICIPATED that the bishops' pastoral letter might be a rejection of capitalism, a return to Keynesian macroeconomic policies, or even a call for socialism. It is none of these. If anything, it is a clear affirmation of confidence in the capitalist system's ability to provide resources effectively while not always properly allocating them. But it is also a critical examination of the American economy with one particular question in mind: how do economic policies affect the poor? The bishops document the finding that the economic system does not provide equitably for the poor and powerless, and they conclude that a new economic democracy must be structured to insure human dignity.

Americans tend to view the economy in polar terms. In the board game *Monopoly*, the rules which permit the building of hotels (and collection of enormous rents) only if all property in a color group is owned, insure that there will be winners and



"In an effort to put a lid on inflation, Congress today voted to move the decimal point one digit to the left."

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losers and that the game will end in a relatively quick fashion. Changing these rules will alter the result enormously. The bishops have not assessed the productive efficiency of some theoretical model of capitalism. They have carefully examined the web of law, policy, and practice which surrounds the economy and determines the winners and losers in the present economic system. They argue that the rules of the game need to be changed to achieve the ultimate objective of satisfying human needs, both material and spiritual. *This does not mean a rejection of the work ethic, the invisible hand, or the right to private property*. However, as private property rights are not absolute, price mechanisms must insure an efficient allocation of resources consistent with human dignity.

In examining employment and welfare programs, the bishops repeatedly find policies which create economic incentives for inefficiency and injustice. One simple example: when welfare eligibility requirements for AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) exclude families if the father is present in the home, incentives for the dissolution of the family are created, clearly not the intent of the program.

The bishops have done their homework: their analysis of economic events and data is comprehensive and coherent. Their call for democratic economy creates a Catholic agenda well worth serious pursuit. In economic language, the letter demands a new objective function, and insists on an incentive structure that is efficient: maximize equity, not material output. The distribution of resources is of primary concern. The bishops focus on macroeconomic issues which must become microeconomic realities. Such an agenda must be pursued at national and international levels to effect the necessary transitions.

As an economist, I would like to expand on two of the policy applications suggested in the draft, and explain how they might be implemented at the parish level. The first is the bishops' call for a new American experiment in which cooperation and collaboration prevail. Their encouragement of cooperative ownership of industry and shared decision-making is an important proposal. The Deficit Recovery Act of 1984 includes major provisions making employee stock ownership very favorable to companies, employees, and banks. The steady growth of worker cooperatives and their excellent record with respect to profitability, productivity, innovation, and personal satisfaction has fueled interest in cooperatives from the financial right to the political left. The use of cooperative business structure for start-ups, conversions, and buy-outs is rapidly increasing.

In conjunction with efforts by the Campaign for Human Development, parish support of cooperative enterprises is possible through groups patterned after the Small Business Administration's SCORE chapters (Service Corps of Retired Executives). Local Catholic Cooperative Assistance Boards could offer business experience, resources, and advice to cooperative enterprises. The Diocese of Charlotte has been very successful in bringing together Catholic managers and workers in a labor management dialogue. (See their consensus paper, "The Workbench of Life" in *Origins*, February 16, 1984.) Finally, financial support of local cooperatives could involve the community in socially productive investments which would implement the spirit of the letter.

A second area of policy implementation on the parish level suggested by the pastoral is that of childcare. The bishops speak clearly, with a resolute voice for the poor and powerless, and as stewards of humanity. They note that our children (our future) are dramatically affected by current eonomic policies: nearly half of the people living below the official poverty level in the U.S. are children. While supporting the rights of parents to care for their own children, the bishops see a critical need for improving daycare services. Business and government officials must be urged to support programs which improve the availability, affordability, and quality of daycare. The use of church facilities for daycare would be an efficient way to help implement such a policy. As political citizens, Catholics should take action to foster both worker cooperatives and quality daycare.

Other important policy prescriptions in the letter include a restructuring of the international economic framework, a negative income tax, a massive national reform of the welfare system, and a "shift out of arms and into butter." Major changes in national priorities and policies are the important task ahead, and the transformation of a political democracy into an economic democracy can begin at the parish level.

The bishops' call for a new commitment to economic justice introduces a moral perspective into our daily economic and political choices. They challenge us to complement our political democracy with an economic democracy in which the spirit of human dignity is the fundamental norm.

The dialogue process, which the bishops have used so effectively in the past for discussing the various drafts of pastoral letters, points in the direction they wish to go to insure fuller participation in the economic system and social structures of American life. The *New York Times* quoted Archbishop Weakland's pun involving Milwaukee's reputation for brewing: "After the first draft," he said, "everything gets better." With great anticipation I look forward to future rounds.

(Rachel A. Willis is the associate director of the Democratic Management Project, Guilford College, Greensboro, North Carolina.)

RUDY OSWALD

Labor & the bishops' letter

THE BISHOPS' draft letter clearly recognizes the central role of work, of workers, and of unions of workers in an ethical evaluation of economic policy. This recognition is a welcome focus amid the cacophony of calls by those who claim that property rights and ownership are the paramount and only elements to be considered in economic decision-making.

The American labor movement concurs wholeheartedly

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with the bishops' statement that: "the most urgent priority for U.S. domestic economic policy is the creation of new jobs with adequate pay and decent working conditions." The document goes well beyond mere handwringing about the plight of the unemployed. It sets forth five specific elements to be undertaken as a national response to unemployment. The bishops call for:

- A major new policy commitment to achieve full employment, defined as in the range of 3 or 4 percent unemployment.
- Increased government support for direct job creation programs targeted on those groups in which unemployment is a persistent problem, such as young people and minorities.
- Expansion of job-training and apprenticeship programs in the private sector.
- Formation of local, state, and national coalitions to press for job creation.
- And improvement of job placement services.

The proposals are all clearly important programs that address the number-one problem of unemployment. Clearly, the nation cannot be satisfied when 8.5 million Americans (7.4 percent) are unemployed, another 1.2 million are too discouraged by their joblessness to be counted in the official unemployment count, and another 5.5 million are on only part-time work schedules, even though they desire full-time work. Today, over 15 million Americans suffer either full or partial unemployment. Of particular concern should be the high unemployment rates suffered by blacks (15.4 percent) and Hispanics (10.9 percent). All of the bishops' policies are clearly within the nation's economic capability, and the country should move forward with such programs.

The bishops' letter also spells out a new recognition of a role for workers in economic decision-making. Recalling America's successful experiment in political democracy, the letter declares that "the time has come for a similar experiment in economic democracy: the creation of an order that guarantees the minimum conditions of human dignity in the economic sphere for every person." The letter goes on to call for "a significantly increased level of collaboration and cooperation among the many economic actors in our society" in order for the nation to rise to the challenges before it. To do this, the letter calls for a new "spirit of cooperation" and the "development of a new partnership between workers and managers." The emphasis is on "genuine participation" and broader "sharing of responsibility in economic society."

The letter also recognizes the problems related to plant-closings. The bishops state that: "It is patently unjust to deny these workers any role in shaping the outcome of such difficult choices. As a minimum, workers have a right to be informed in advance when such decisions are under consideration, a right to negotiate with management about possible alternatives, and a right to fair compensation and assistance with retraining and relocation expenses should these be necessary."

The AFL-CIO has supported plant-closing legislation like that proposed by the bishops. It is our hope that the Congress will now move forward with such legislation.

The section of the letter dealing with poverty sets forth norms that affect workers, as it calls for the "removal of barriers to full and equal employment for women and minorities, improving child care services, improving the quality of education for poor children, promoting programs to foster self-help among the poor, and reforming the tax system to reduce the burden on the poor."

The bishops also reiterate the church's longstanding support of "the right of workers to form unions." They state that: "trade unions express the essentially social nature of human persons and manifest the human need for solidarity," and note a new attack upon workers' rights to organize:

> *No one may deny the right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining or coercively suppress unions without attacking human dignity itself. Therefore we firmly oppose organized efforts, such as those regrettably now seen in this country, to break existing unions or to prevent workers from organizing through intimidation and threats. U.S. labor law reform is needed to give greater substance to the right to organize, to prevent intimidation of workers, and to provide remedies in a more timely manner for unfair labor practices.*

As the bishops look at international relationships, they challenge U.S. trade unions "to recognize that justice in wages and employment within our borders cannot be purchased at the cost of injustice on a global scale." The labor movement accepts that challenge, while recognizing the bishops' caveat that "we must devise ways of insuring employment and adequate wages for U.S. workers which are consistent with increased participation in international trade by developing countries."

Clearly, the pastoral letter will be denounced by those who would deny workers their right to form unions, and by those who claim that unemployment and poverty will be cured by policies that reward the wealthy and whose benefits might someday slowly trickle down to benefit the rest of society.

However, for workers, farmers, the poor, and the elderly, this document is a clarion call for a new society that gives a voice to workers and farmers, and offers them a democratic and positive role in economic decision-making. The poor and the elderly are given a new hope for a "life with dignity."

The letter realistically calls for a "system of taxation based on assessment according to ability to pay." We welcome the recognition that there are priorities that are above "the preservation of privileged concentrations of power, wealth, and income." The economy should be geared to meeting human needs first and foremost, and it should provide that all have a voice in economic affairs.

(Rudy Oswald is director of the AFL-CIO's Department of Economic Research in Washington, D.C.)

COMING: A liberation theologian looks at economic development in India and the United States, and Carol Coston, O.P., reports on efforts by religious investors to encourage alternative forms of economic organization.

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The case for untidiness

ARTHUR HERTZBERG

IN KHOMEINI'S Iran, the state exists as an instrument of Islam: Christian and Jewish nonbelievers are tolerated, and heretics from Islam, such as the gentle believers in the Bahai faith, are murdered. In the United States, these days, several varieties of Christian fundamentalists are campaigning, with official support from the Republican party, to pass a constitutional amendment against abortion and to change the law so as to foster prayer in the public schools. In Israel, the head of the ultranationalist Tehiya Party, Professor Yuval Neeman, has announced several times that he will disregard any limitation by the Israeli government on further settlement of Jews in the West Bank. To the right of him, the ultranationalist Rabbi Meir Kahane regards it as his divinely appointed mission to push, or even shoot, Arabs out of the West Bank. The annexation of that territory is held to be a sacred purpose, and the government which stands in the way is itself "illegal."

Iran, Israel, and the United States are, of course, not the same. Nonetheless, there are at least two threads which tie together all of these different events. The liberal Western state, with its commitment to individual human rights, is under attack in all three countries. Those who are attacking represent constituencies which have felt themselves outside the political process. The Mullahs in Iran, the fundamentalist preachers in America, and the fundamentalist rabbis in Israel are, for the most part, the leaders of elements in their various countries of the lower bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The Western state has, historically, been run by the educated middle class which, in its majority, is everywhere, East and West, this-worldly and nonbelieving. To its present enemies the Western liberal state is not a neutral traffic cop trying to insure the maximum amount of rights and freedom for all its citizens. It is an instrument of domination by a secular humanist bourgeoisie, which imposes its nonbelief through its control of public life.

The problem of church and state is all the more difficult because, theologically speaking, the conservatives are right and the liberals are wrong. Biblical religion makes no distinction between the civil and religious order. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, society in all its parts must be ruled theocratically to enact the will of God. The modern Western state is not a creation of biblical religion but rather of the splintering of Christianity into so many factions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To keep civil peace, a state had to arise in a Europe that did not foster Christianity as its avowed primary purpose.

It is that state which is now increasingly under attack, and the issues are not quite as clearcut as the most passionate protagonists on both sides of the argument would have it. In favor of the secular state, one can indeed quote John Courtney Murray, that pluralism is against the will of God but that it is the only way to keep peace in the city of man. Against this dictum, there stands the prospect, awful to many, that all the principles, including those of basic ethics, which bind a pluralist society together are based on consent alone, and that having been so made, they can, similarly, be unmade. In Western thought the Roman Catholic tradition has held fast to the notion that this cannot be so; there is natural law which obligates all people, believers and nonbelievers alike. This concept exists also in rabbinic Judaism. Maimonides, basing himself on Talmudic sources, defined the "seven commandments which were given to the children of Noah" as constituting a basic moral code for all humanity. (Jews are obligated to all of the 613 positive and negative commandments that the rabbis found in the Five Books of Moses.)

Even many heretics from biblical religion could not abandon the belief in a moral law that was true for all. In the history of Jewish theology and thought, Baruch Spinoza was the arch-heretic. He was the first important figure within Jewry to assert that the Bible contained many historical errors, and that even its morality was human and imperfect. Nonetheless, Spinoza did not relativize ethics; even as he devastated biblical morality, Spinoza nonetheless insisted that there was an absolute ethic that could be demonstrated with the exactness of mathematical proof; there were rules of conduct which applied to everyone. Spinoza, the arch-heretic, thus remained within the biblical religious tradition in one fundamental respect: he refused to believe that ethics were simply a matter of consent. There was a "natural law" more certain even than any injunctions that could be derived from the Bible.

Those right-wingers in America today who are arguing for a

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constitutional amendment to outlaw abortion or to permit prayer in the public school, no matter what may be the merit of their arguments on specific issues, are not without a case. There is some truth to the assertion that the liberal state tends to teach nonbelief. The separation of religion and the state inevitably suggests that the nonreligious, public realm which all citizens hold in common is more important than the sectarian private differences which divide us from each other. Biblical religion, in all its forms, has indeed been removed from its centrality in America by the separation of church and state. Some unabashed right-wingers have, therefore, been arguing baldly and boldly, that America must return to being a "Christian nation."

But that is not the way of the more sophisticated. The new archbishop in New York, the most pluralistic city in America, John J. O'Connor (clearly a man of goodwill, who wants good relations with all non-Catholics) invokes "natural law," which supposedly teaches what is good for everybody. President Reagan has produced a further permutation: he has based his support for a constitutional amendment to ban abortion under almost all circumstances not even on natural law, at least not directly; it is really, so he has told the country, a defense of the *constitutional* principle of the protection of all human beings.

BUT IS THERE a natural law which defines truth for all people? Can it be invoked to command the assent of rabbis, and even of Buddhist monks? I think not.

On the vexed question of abortion, rabbinic Judaism teaches that the fetus is not a person until it is born. On the famous moral question of whether to save the mother or the child in the birth process, Jewish teaching is unequivocal: under such dire circumstances, one is commanded "to hack the fetus to pieces in the womb" to save the life of the mother. If the anti-abortion amendment passes, in the name of natural law, I would therefore be in the position of having to give moral instruction to Jews which would be illegal in the law of America. As a rabbi, I am not prepared to believe that Catholic theologians or fundamentalist Protestant ones have superior understanding of the moral laws which derive from the Bible. Under analysis, "natural law" thus tends to become the teaching of an individual tradition, with some universalist face-lift.

Certainly I must confess, again as a rabbi and not with any pretense that I am basing myself on some universal values, that I find wholesale abortions, in the hundreds of thousands, morally revolting; and that, as a child of the Jewish version of the biblical tradition, I find such action morally defensible only in specific cases when the reason is compelling and where the case has been decided on grounds other than the mother's subjectivity. What I cannot do is to battle for a law in which I universalize for everybody my own anguish both for thousands of fetuses whose right to be born should be protected and over the occasional one which should in fact be denied that privilege.

Jewish teaching is itself not exempt from the same criticism, that what it teaches as universal truth applicable to all is really a rarified version of its own principles. So Maimonides's version of the "seven commandments given to the children of Noah" includes among them as basic to all the rest, the belief in a God who rewards the righteous and punishes the sinners. Obviously, this rules out believers in non-theistic religions, even the most virtuous of humanists, and most believers in philosophic ethics. Maimonides may indeed have been right in insisting there is no sure foundation for ethics unless they are grounded in the revelation of a personal God, but this issue has been argued for centuries, before and after his day, without ultimate resolution. He who would make laws for all of society on the basis of Maimonides's definition of what is true, even for non-Jews, should at least know that he is really enacting a version of Judaism.

Religious or ideological absolutists may sometimes succeed, even today, in imposing their wills on society in the name of their God. They must be reminded that this opens the door to having exactly that happen to them in places where someone else's absolute is in control. Those who would stop all abortions in the United States, where major traditions believe that abortion is at least occasionally permissible, must remember that they cannot complain of the persecution of heretics by Khomeini, in the exercise of his belief that he must purge his society of harmful elements.

IS THERE A limit to tolerance and to relativism? This is not an easy question, and I know no clearcut answer. There is, supposedly, agreement everywhere on such basics as the prohibition against stealing and murder but, even so, there are quarrels, and not only about abortion. Are some forms of passive euthanasia, where help is withheld in hopeless medical situations, to be regarded as murder? Is capitalism or communism (take your choice, depending on your ideology) to be defined as inherently a form of stealing by one class from another? There is, at the same time, consensus in American society on matters which are not against "natural" or biblical law. We have, for example, outlawed polygamy, which flourished in the Bible and exists to this day in Muslim societies.

The Western liberal state is indeed more secularist than it perhaps need be. Its only rationale is the one that was given by the Founding Fathers of America: the government exists as a traffic cop so that we may do one another the minimum amount of injury, either physical or spiritual. This state can only protect our bodies. Any state which enters the realm of our souls had better be one that God himself makes at the end of days. If we attempt to make a godly kingdom, it always becomes an engine of oppression. What we have learned, painfully, in recent centuries is that we can live best only in untidiness, with a decent concern for the opinions of all people, even as this costs many of us as believers something very precious to our own soul. In the West, even in an unbelieving twentieth century, what we tend to define by consent does bear relationship to the biblical roots of our common culture, and yet we cannot stretch this too far, to force the conscience of one or another branch of society.

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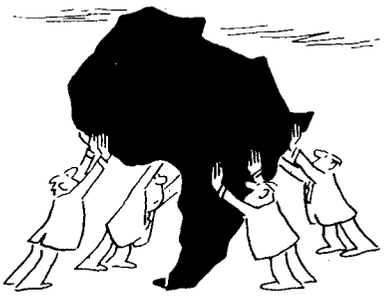

FOOD AID TO AFRICA

Putting the famine in context

J. G. DONDERS

HE WAS AN Italian-Kenyan farmer, totally integrated into African life, the husband of a Kenyan woman. He spoke about the drought and the famine, and explained why he had stopped growing food long before the drought. He had even stopped growing coffee. The fertilizer imported from Europe is now so expensive he can't sell his beans against the price of their production. His coffee had been infested by a disease, and the insecticide, also imported from Europe, was so costly it priced his coffee out of the market.

He laughed rather bitterly about the plans of the European Economic Community and the United States to send food in the form of wheat, corn, milkpowder, pasta, and tomato sauce. He said: "The problem is not our lack of food; the problem is your overproduction. If you would not have too much, we wouldn't have too little. You paralyze our productivity to enable your own survival. You invented a beautiful way to transform vice into virtue. You are strangling us with your left hand, while you are feeding us with your right. Don't tell me that your right hand does not know what your left hand is doing."

THE BISHOP was sitting opposite me. He had just returned from a meeting in Kinshasa, Zaire, where bishops from all over Africa had been discussing justice and peace issues. Bishop Sangu is the bishop of Mbeya in Tanzania. Mbeya is a region that had an abundant harvest this year, notwithstanding the terrible drought in other parts of the country. The bishop was, nevertheless, worrying about the future. The farmers in his region have no direct access to the market. Their produce may not be transported. The bishop told me he had seen a truckdriver practically beaten to death because he was transporting a small bag of beans to his family in town. (He added that he himself would not dare to transport even a few pounds of beans.) He said that he did not understand why the government forbade the transport of food, especially as some areas needed food very badly.

But a German Benedictine working in Tanzania did understand the reason for the prohibition. Because of it, the government can force farmers to sell only to official government buyers. These government officials pay the farmers a small fraction of the price the government gets when it sells the same product to consumers, which in some cases means that the farmers are taxed 90 percent when selling their food. This difference in price makes it possible for the urban elite to survive, and even to enjoy the relative luxury of their life in town, driving cars and drinking beer.

Farmers are not allowed to import tractors. They are supposed to work with oxen. But the town-dwellers are still importing their luxury cars.

The net result is that the farmers have stopped producing food crops. Such crops do not pay. As a result food production has been going down all over Africa in the last ten years, and food aid from outside helps only the towns. As long as this type of help is given, no local problems will be tackled. What we need, the Benedictine said, is a good farmers' union.

THE SMALL country, Malawi, (population 6.2 million) can feed itself. As soon as one leaves the airport of the capital, Lilongwe, one sees large food silos shining in the sun. They contain sufficient food reserves for a whole year.

Malawi is one of the only African countries still exporting food to its neighbors. It seems to be the only country in Africa that concentrated on rural development after independence. It could not do otherwise when hundreds of thousands of migrant workers returned from South Africa. While other third-world countries spent about 5 percent of the aid given to them on rural development, Malawi spent almost all the help it received on such development. Consequently, the farmers are better paid. The government buys a bag of maize for 11 Kwacha and sells it for 13 Kwacha. That is much more than the 10 percent a Tazanian farmer or the 15 percent a Kenyan farmer may receive for their products from their governments. But even in Malawi there are difficulties. The population has begun to eat more and more bread. Malawi is unable to produce all the cereals needed for such bread. The food problem in Africa is also to a great extent a cultural problem.

HAROLD MILLER, a Mennonite working for the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCK), made that very clear. He grew up in one of those remarkable Amish communities in America which even nowadays doesn't use fertilizer or motorized farming equipment. (This is probably the reason they have some of the best agricultural land in the

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United States today.) He told me how Western colonizers introduced few traditional African foods in the formal food market. He gave trees as an example. The immigrants had not been used to eating the leaves of trees. Consequently, they never considered tree leaves as a serious food resource.

The same thing happened to practically all the indigenous vegetables, seeds, berries, and nuts. Local farmers started to cultivate and eat carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, onions, "Irish" potatoes, and maize. Animal husbandry followed a similar pattern. Though camels make human survival possible in marginal desert areas, there is scarcely an official camel market in Eastern Africa. Westerners were not familiar with these animals, and tended to overlook their breeding. New foodstuffs, introduced from Europe, made African farmers dependent on Western markets for seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. There were further consequences. Until very recently, money was not invested on the improvement of the indigenous animals and edible plants. Farmers tried to import Western plants, fruits, and animals (including snails and shrimps), most times with the intention of exporting them back to the very countries from which the imported flora and fauna originally came. There has been but one exception of considerable interest: the cassava plant. European farmers have discovered it as an excellent, cheap alternative fodder for their cattle, and are buying it from many third-world countries.

Africans are starting to become more and more suspicious of Western assistance. Would it not be better, they ask, to refuse the American and European cereal — and milkpowder — aid? Would it not be wiser to do what India did about ten years ago in almost the same kind of circumstances? India refused aid sent from the United States. Wheat was dumped into the ocean. Is not that the reason that India can feed itself at the moment?

This is a very difficult dilemma: people are dying daily in over twenty-five African countries. Aid has to be given to them. But if that aid is given only in the form of food, it will only worsen the situation. Africa will become more and more dependent on the West and the North. Tanzania will never get its farmers' union. Kenya will never build necessary storage. In Malawi the diet will grow further and further away from local food production. Many of the action groups which favor food aid to Africa speak about the *right* each human being has to sufficient food and drink, a right that is most compelling in a world with a surplus of food. But speaking of human rights in such terms is culturally determined. Within a more traditional justice pattern such rights are considered quite differently. In the traditional Gikuyu society in Kenya, for example, justice means that every family has the means to be able to be self-reliant. The society in which they live has the duty to provide those means, to which they have a right. But each family has the duty to be self-reliant, once those means are provided.

It would be good if the world community would apply that traditional African idea of justice when helping that continent. The world community should make it possible for Africa to take care of itself. That is the only type of help that will out-help help. And isn't that our final aim?

Screen

ALL OF THEM

CATCHING UP ON FALL RELEASES

"R" STRIKES AGAIN: its's a good title to cover a number of new releases, the group of sex-and-violence films now dominating the box office, like *Body Double, Crimes of Passion, Terror in the Aisles*, and biggest box-office hit of all, Arnold Schwarzenegger's new incarnation as *The Terminator*. Since this column last appeared, however, there have been several important openings: two major melodramas about farming, a surprisingly excellent comedy, and one disaster masquerading as social commentary. The last perhaps, deserves the first comment, since it may do more harm than the more openly exploitative films now on view. *The Terminator* is easy to classify and dismiss, but what do we do with *Teachers?*

The film is a *Mad* magazine version of *A Nation at Risk*, but the only problem is that it's not funny. The core could have been the basis of something useful — the chance, perhaps, to provide a modern version of *Up the Down Staircase* or *The Blackboard Jungle*. The parents of an ex-student bring suit against the Midwest school (named John F. Kennedy High, to conjure up some sixties ghosts) for passing the child despite his illiteracy. Former idealist, teacher Nick Nolte, reluctantly goes along with school board pressure to testify that the student was well-taught, and saves his remaining energies to prevent the automatic promotion of a new student, played by Ralph Macchio, who brings to his role of bored punk some winning, cocky freshness. Nolte also has some good moments reminiscing about ideals with friend and vice-principal, Judd Hirsch, whose haggard face, even through laughter, telegraphs just how soon he will sell out and make a separate peace with bureaucracy.

If *Teachers* had been content to explore these relationships, it might have made for a solid, even searing bit of social criticism. But the plot is saddled with too many other relationships and absurdities to make a serious, and finally even intelligible, statement about the problems of teaching or teachers. Macchio, naturally, is given a friend marked for early doom, an epileptic whose taste for drugs is used for some false, contrived climaxes. Nolte is saddled with a relationship with a beautiful ex-student who has become a lawyer representing the plaintiffs in the illiteracy lawsuit. Played by Jobeth Williams, the cute lawyer is given to repetitive, shrill preaching about the rights and wrongs of the case (even, we're supposed to believe, to her bigwig boss). In one encounter, Nolte yells back at Williams, telling her she "doesn't have to walk naked through the school corridors every day" — a signaling line that made me uneasy until, alas, my fears that it

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would be literalized came true at the end of the film.

But the worst aspect of the movie is its treatment of teachers. We never see anyone actually teaching: Nolte may have had the intention, but classroom shots show him joshing the students, or yelling at them, or, at best, discussing the suit. The rest of the profession is here represented as a menagerie. The school psychologist goes berserk one morning and squirts duplicating fluid all over a teacher named "Ditto" for his semi-permanent occupation of the mimeo machine; once recovered, he's back in class, where he simply tests repetitively while reading the newspapers. When he dies at his desk, no one notices. The only teacher worth his salt, the film implies, is an escaped mental patient who gets hired by accident: he recreates "real" history by donning the disguises of famous heroes and delighting the kids, who of course boo when the men in the white coats arrive, maybe because they never had to open a book. I forgot to mention that the gym teacher, naturally, gets three girls pregnant.

Considering this scattershot satire, it's amazing that *Teachers* has a major missing target: public funding for American education. Often we hear that the lawsuit is "all about money," meaning that the parents of the illiterate student only care about a settlement. Nowhere does anyone raise the issue of school finance and how it affects teacher performance and morale. I realize *Teachers* is a film, and a Hollywood product, but even with admissible exaggerations it is just plain nonsense to depict the situation of high school teachers without addressing the source of their problem: America just doesn't want to pay them well. Don't hold your breath until a *single* recommendation on pay, from any of the multiple reports on schools issued in this last year, gets implemented.

The ad for *Teachers* features an apple and an "A+" sign. But the film actually reminds me of a line from a college teacher to a student complaining about a failing grade. "Why did you give me an F?" the student asked. "Because," the professor answered, "I couldn't give you a Z."

A GREAT DEAL of nonsense has been written about the left and right side of the brain, but none so sublime as the screenplay for *All of Me*. The left here is Steve Martin, the right Lily Tomlin, and their splendid teamwork in this screwball but tender farce is enough to justify a Siamese-twin Oscar. The plot of *All of Me* is grade-A ditzy, but the acting is so superb that you succumb to its cheeriness and end up singing the theme.

Tomlin plays Edwina Cutwater, a rich, chronically sick, Beverly Hills eccentric who vows to come back from the dead in the healthy body of a beautiful young woman. She has never enjoyed life, she claims, and is determined, for once, to use her money to buy some real pleasure. Martin plays a dissatisfied lawyer, Roger Cobb, who is supposed to help Edwina, in effect, inherit her own wealth in a bizarre transmigration scheme; instead he insults her by commenting frankly on her plan. Ironically, when Edwina keels over, the swami handling the scam blows it and lands her soul in Martin's port bow. Then the real fun begins.

It's plain slapstick at first, but powered by the extraordinary mimicry of Martin. With Tomlin ensconced inside (Roger hears her voice, but sees her only in mirrors), he walks jaggedly down streets, breaks periodically into an effeminate stalk, or, when waking, slaps himself with a right hand seemingly detached from the rest of his body. The ultimate scene occurs when Roger falls asleep in court while representing his boss in a sleazy divorce case: "Edwina" is forced to take over and argue by doing her version of a male lawyer. It's Martin doing Edwina doing a parody of his own role, a walking three-layered fruitcake chockful of nuts.

When Tomlin appears in mirrors, moreover, a different sort of teamwork starts to evolve. At first the humor in these scenes is banal, involving some predictable bathroom situations. But in time the jokes are upgraded as Tomlin gets her chance at physical farce, sticking her tongue in cheek, for example, to help Martin while shaving. The film also turns deeper as Edwina discovers more about real life by experiencing hope and disappointment in a new body: her prison thus becomes a route to freedom. Martin, in turn, finds someone worth caring about, although the constant witplay prevents this theme from turning overly sentimental. Finally, director Carl Reiner not only keeps his lead duo in deep sync, but also knows how to use a bit role — in this case, the swami, played by Richard Libertini — to sustain interest with some climactic crackpottery even when we know how the story will end.

All of Me, in short, is a sassy and endearing tour-de-force. It is frequently compared with *Tootsie*, but in truth Steve Martin outdoes Dustin Hoffman: he has to be both male and female without benefit of costume change. Tomlin comes across far more powerfully than *Tootsie*'s pallid women. Her final dance, a distillation of Edwina's growth, is an ode to joy that transcends the limits of plot and character to give *All of Me* a genuine emotional force. I think a critic gets to say this at least once a year, and this is my turn: whatever its defects, don't miss this film.

TO WHAT DO we owe this fall's harvest of films about farming? The answer is simple: two dedicated individuals have brought their memories and faith in American farmers to dignified, if not perfect, cinematic life. *Places in the Heart* belongs to its writer/director Robert Benton; *Country* belongs to its star and co-producer Jessica Lange. The first is a tribute to Texas farmers during the Depression, when and where Benton grew up; the second is a protest on behalf of Iowan farmers in the early 1980s, when Lange, revisiting her home, witnessed the wreckage caused by some harsh federal farm-loan policies. At first glance nothing but coincidental timing and these personal touches seems to unite the two films, or, perhaps, even a third, Sissy Spacek's farm entry, *The River*, to be released later this fall.

Certain themes, however, unify both films. *Country* and *Places in the Heart* both depict farmers enduring grueling hard times: both imply that if tornadoes don't get you, bankers will. Both films testify to the values of patience, hard work, faith, and the ability to forgive, values by which the heartland, in

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sentimental mythology, is supposed to function. Finally, most curiously, both are female Westerns; neither is feminist, but both *Country* and *Places in the Heart* share a kind of matriarchal populism where mothers are seen rallying the salt of the earth against injustice. While the populist tone recalls *The Grapes of Wrath*, the portrayal of women's devotion to inherited land looks back to a different thirties' film: *Gone with the Wind*.

Benton's matriarch is Edna Spaulding, played with Norma Rae-like true grit by Sally Field. Edna is based on Benton's great grandmother, whose husband, like Edna's, was killed as a deputy sheriff, and whose turn-of-the-century struggle to retain her Tara is here updated three decades. Benton's blind great uncle, who made a living twining brooms and caning chairs, appears in *Places* as a bitter blind man, Mr. Will (John Malkovich), who lodges with Edna and then slowly becomes a friend and aide as she tries to stay solvent. So personal is Benton's touch that the creepy banker eyeing Edna's property and threatening foreclosure on her loans is named after his least favorite contemporary New York film critic: so much for the metropolis.

Benton's reminiscences and satiric jabs in *Places* mix with some clichéd plot material that, nevertheless, retains excitement and freshness. Inspired by advice from an itinerant black worker named Moze (superbly played by Danny Glover), Edna conceives a plan to raise a prize cotton crop to pay her bills. With this ex-sharecropping assistant, her handicapped lodger, and two young children, Edna mounts, in effect, a "rainbow coalition" of the dark and disadvantaged to make the meek inherit the earth. The predictability of this plot, however, is redeemed by superb ensemble acting, some tart dialogue, and — at each point where the film might have become conventional — some touch that saves it. When the blind man asks Edna what she looks like one evening, Sally Field's response is spoiled by some ridiculous violin music; fortunately, we are spared a Hollywood style romantic follow-up. Later, when — on cue, it seems — the Klan shows up to teach Moze a lesson, Mr. Will saves him in a surprising way uniquely appropriate to his handicap.

Benton first filmed Texas in *Bonnie and Clyde* (another satire on bankers); later, he initiated the new vogue for films on family life with *Kramer v. Kramer*. *Places in the Heart* involves a conjunction between the earlier films: a subplot involving Edna's sister (Lindsay Crouse) and her husband (Ed Harris), who has an affair with the local schoolteacher (Amy Madigan), seems an attempt to underline the family values that Edna personifies. To this populist-bourgeois mix Benton has added religion, though not of the fundamentalist Bible-thumping sort. The town church — present from the first in hymns sung over the opening images — is seen as a house of healing and reconciliation, a source of social cohesion but not conformity. The closing scene provides an extremely powerful, if surreal, version of this as Benton attempts, in effect, to film a communion of saints.

Places in the Heart leaves you with a good feeling, but for me, at least, this didn't last. The film has all the appeal, and all the limits, of its sweet sentimentality and the good-evil contrasts at its center. In tone and texture (with superb cinematography by Nestor Alemandros), *Places* makes for a consistently fine film, but not a great one — endearing but just not profound.

"Actually, we were better off four years ago. This bench was new."

IRONICALLY, Jessica Lange is both the source of *Country*'s great strength and one weakness. Like Benton with *Places*, Lange intends the film as a homage to her native region (she grew up in Minnesota) and its tradition of independence, family-owned farms and homesteads. The seriousness of her intent is evident in the name of her production company, Pangea, the geologic designation of the original land mass of the earth before it broke up into continental plates. As farmer's wife Jewell Ivy, Lange is the major force attempting to keep the old way of living intact before the onslaught of modern finance. Unfortunately, her heroism requires some forced maneuverings with the screenplay that weaken the film. If *Places* is too sweet, *Country* turns unconvincingly sour.

Jewell is a plains-state Edna who holds the farm together when the federal Farmer's Home Administration refuses to offer continuing loan extensions to her husband Gil (Sam Shepherd), a policy which, when repealed, the film celebrates in an added postscript. In the movie, however, the hard-nosed approach replaces older customs of deferring to agricultural cycles and the ups and downs of profits, or relying on "the man" (the independent farmer) to make good in the long run. A bureaucrat succinctly explains the bottom line on farming: "It's not a way of life anymore, it's a business."

The Ivys try to fight, a struggle set against a cold, gaunt, elemental, Iowan landscape (the film was made on location last winter, and *feels* it). From the first, Jewell is presented as the family mainstay. *Almost* unglamorous in pincurlers, Lange is seen initially loading some burgers with mayo and mustard, then driving through dusk to feed her menfolk at harvest. After a tornado, she leaps to find her son buried beneath an overturned grain truck; when another farmer is foreclosed, in a strange but affecting scene, she tries to save his sheep by outrunning a collie in a bank roundup. Most importantly, as financial pressures increase and her husband col-

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lapses, she assumes the farm's leadership. Her strength is not just outer but inner: Lange convincingly plays Jewell as a powerful introvert whose spiritual resources make her a still center in a chaotic world.

The problem is that Gil's breakdown is simply unbelievable — forced, it seems, to fit the movie's need for matriarchal heroism. Shepherd, who had been in danger of making understatement into overacting in *The Right Stuff*, actually comes across as quite human in the first half of *Country*; flexible and rounded, he even displays a sense of humor. But in the second half, he has to turn surly, get drunk, and start bashing his children. Of course, such things do happen; but here they seem contrived in order to give Lange the role of prime non-mover.

A similar sign of the problem is evident in Wilford Brimley's role as Jewell Ivy's father. Brimley has become one of the major supporting actors in film recently: in *The China Syndrome*, *Absence of Malice*, *Tender Mercies*, and *The Natural*, he has become a symbol of middle-American shrewdness and kindness — with his firepump body, his no-nonsense demeanor, and his aw-shucks integrity. But he has not been given much to do in *Country* except stand around as an icon of authenticity. His only significant statement is to accuse Shepherd of mismanaging the land, a claim made by no one else, not even the bureaucrats, who know the villain is the weather. Gil Ivy has to be blamed, however, to raise Jewell's value.

Country is a topical, gritty protest; its defects are only evident in the second half. Jessica Lange, however much she overreaches here, has come a long way from her role in *King Kong*. Even that movie she distinguished by her last words, a plaintive "Kooooong," to the beast (after all, he did love her), just before he took the plunge. But then he was falling toward earth, where her sympathies apparently so strongly lie. She could — like so many glamorous Hollywood stars — be doing much worse.

TOM O'BRIEN

Books: CRITICS' CHRISTMAS CHOICES

Jane Howard

JANE HOWARD *is the author of* Families *and* A Different Woman. *Her latest book, a biography of Margaret Mead, appeared this fall.*

ANTHROPOLOGICAL literature is all very well, sometimes, but after more than five years of research in that realm (as background for *Margaret Mead: A Life*, Simon & Schuster, $19.95, 527 pp.), it is a heady relief to rediscover other approaches to human mysteries. "Writing fiction," as Eudora Welty says in her beguiling collection of three lectures *One Writer's Beginnings* (Harvard, $10, 104 pp.), "has developed in me an abiding respect for the unknown in a human lifetime and a sense of where to look for the threads, how to follow, how to connect, find in the thick of the tangle what clear line persists. The strands are all there. . . ."

Nobody untangles these threads and strands better than Nadine Gordimer, whose sixteenth book *Something Out There* (Viking, $15.95, 203 pp.) is a collection of nine stories and a novella about her native South Africa. She portrays the tensions of her world through the eyes both of wretched blacks whose houses are "arranged inside and out to hold the number of people the ingenuity of necessity provides for" and an overprivileged "generation of white South Africans in the know, dumped by their elders with the deadly task of defending a life they haven't chosen for themselves, the singular heritage of their whiteness." Her eye for detail is masterly.

So is William McPherson's, in his affecting first novel *Testing the Current*, (Simon & Schuster, $15.95, 348 pp.), which tells of another prosperous society on the brink of disorder: the American Upper Midwest in 1939. The perceptions come from an exceptionally observant nine-year-old named Tommy McAllister, who has two much older brothers, a devoted but sometimes distracted mother, a father who is a model of capitalist rectitude, and growing doubts that things are what they seem. Scenes in which the son hides love letters his mother gets from another man, and goes with his father to investigate an accident at the plant, are especially affecting.

On busy mornings and even languid ones I tend to toss aside the business and sports sections of the *Times* unread, but this year I came across two books that made me wonder what this habit has cost me: Patricia O'Toole's *Corporate Messiah: The Hiring and Firing of Million-Dollar Managers* (Morrow, $15.95, 320 pp.), and Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories* (University of Chicago Press, 1976, $6.95, 217 pp.). "God has permitted Armand Hammer many things," O'Toole writes of one of her corporate subjects, "and anyone gauche enough to suggest that immortality is not among them should be reminded of the astonishing events of 1976." In describing those events, Patricia O'Toole tells of "a kind of philandering complete with generous payoffs to salve hurt feelings when the romance is over."

Norman Maclean's classic memoir of his young manhood in Montana was published after his retirement from the University of Chicago's English department. "In our family," his title story begins, "there was no clear line between religion and fly-fishing." A Presbyterian minister's son, Maclean also kept youthful company with an assortment of cartographers, lumberjacks, card sharks, pimps, cowboys, and warmhearted waitresses. "I could never be talked into believing," he writes, "that all a fish knows is hunger and fear. I have tried to feel nothing but hunger and fear and

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don't see how a fish could grow to six inches if that were all he ever felt."

William F. May

WILLIAM F. MAY *is Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., professor of Christian Ethics at Georgetown's Kennedy Institute of Ethics. His most recent book is* The Physician's Covenant *(Westminster).*

THESE recommendations won't suit you if you want to curl up with a confection on a snowy winter's holiday. They are too weighty for that. If, however, you have grown tired of the debate on justice in philosophical circles between the libertarians and egalitarians, you might be interested in one of the following authors—two of whom are in their thirties.

William Galston's *Justice and the Human Good* (University of Chicago, 1980, $20.00, 324 pp.) breaks with both the libertarian Nozick and the egalitarian Rawls who, though opposed to each other, concur in bracketing the question of human good.

Robert Nozick's libertarianism (*Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Basic Books, $9.95, 367 pp.) winks at the question of the goods which each in his liberty pursues, as long as one does not interfere with the similar liberty of others. Imposing is the chief of sins. The poor can, at best, hope for charity from their fellows. They cannot appeal to a principle of distributive justice for relief in meeting basic needs.

John Rawls's egalitarian (*A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University $9.95, 607 pp.) breaks with this rich man's philosophy and insists on fairness as the pre-eminent principle of justice, but once again largely brackets the question of the goods pursued. Rawls insists only that everyone get a fair share of the pie, whatever that pie may be.

Galston ably argues that a society cannot afford to ignore the question of the contents of the pie—the goods which men and women ought to pursue—however disposed a consumerist society may be to neglect the issue.

In his *Spheres of Justice* (Basic Books, $9.95, 345 pp.) Michael Walzer criticizes Nozick and Rawls for a different reason. He finds them too "monarchical"; they rely on a single principle to govern all questions of justice. Principles of justice should vary according to the spheres in which distributions of goods take place. For example: distributions in the marketplace, based on the cash nexus, should not spill over into other spheres—political, artistic, and sexual. Injustice results chiefly from the tyrannous attempt to dominate one arena through the principles and powers appropriate to another.

Walzer's book also poses for Americans the moral problem of the stranger. He insists that membership in a society is the first and preeminent issue in distributive justice, not simply because membership conditions the receipt of other goods, but because belonging is itself an intrinsic good. As an immigrant, and perpetually migrant nation, America, more than most countries, must reckon with the moral issue of membership, a problem that goes deeper than bare citizenship. From the Puritans forward we have tended to fear the stranger as a hemorrhage in an already established universe—whether that stranger appeared under the form of the Native American, the Black, the East European, the Jew, the Vietnamese, the next generation across the breakfast table, or the kid at high school with a funny accent. What are the warrants, political, philosophical, and theological for remaining open to the stranger?

Paul Starr's *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (Basic Books, $11.95, 514 pp.) deals with an exception to the Marxist theory of alienated labor. How is it possible that a given group of workers (physicians), who have not themselves provided the funds for the facilities, equipment, research, and operating costs of the institutions in which they largely work (the hospital), nevertheless remained owners of the product of their labor (medical services), instead of ending up the employees of any of several sponsoring bodies—the government, foundations, insurance companies, corporations, universities, or unions? Starr's extended historical narrative across one hundred and fifty years closes with recent indications of a rapid, imminent decline in the physician's power. Among its other virtues, this winner of the National Book Award offers an excellent case study for issues in distributive justice. Maybe young people today aren't voting with these issues of distributive justice in mind, but a few younger scholars are contributing richly to the discussion.

Elizabeth Shannon

ELIZABETH SHANNON *is the author of* Up in the Park *(Atheneum), a diary of her four years in Ireland while her husband served there as the U.S. Ambassador. She has just finished a mystery novel and is at work on another book about Ireland. She lives in Boston.*

TWO quite different books about Ireland top my list of this year's reading.

Anyone seriously interested in the dilemma of Northern Ireland should read Padraig O'Malley's *The Uncivil Wars: Ireland Today* (Houghton Mifflin, $20, 15 pp., now available in paper with an added afterword by the author bringing events up to date). Readers will come away from it with their hopes dashed for a quick, easy, or simple solution.

O'Malley, Irish-born and educated, living now in Boston, juxtaposes interviews with Irish leaders on both sides of the border with his own analyses. He places a heavy load of responsibility on the people in the Republic for their refusal to consider seriously changes in the Irish constitution which the people of the North would find less threatening to their Protestantism. Showing how intractable both sides of the population of Northern Ireland are in their demands, O'Malley outlines possible compromise positions. Alas, Nationalists and Unionists in Northern Ireland have never been famous for making mutual concessions.

The dark underside of fading Anglo-Irish aristocracy is re-created in gentle and humorous prose by Molly Keane in the second novel of her "second period." (Miss Keane resumed her career as a novelist in 1981, after having published

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several successful novels in the 1930's under the pen name M. J. Farrell.)

In *Time After Time* (Alfred A. Knopf, $13.95, 249 pp.), an aging dandy and gourmet cook, Jasper Swift, shares his crumbling country estate with his three dotty sisters. Everything, themselves included, is worn out, used up, faded, and out-of-date, but they try desperately to live up to the standards of their youth and Mummie. They dress for dinner each evening, compliment Jasper on his elegant and original repasts (sometimes Jasper's delicate casseroles have to be stretched out with the dog's food), and they close their eyes to the old hurts and traumas of their childhood.

The appearance of a cousin, long thought to be dead, changes their lives and forces them, briefly, to face reality. The light is too bright; they happily retreat back into the softer shadows of their twilight lives, where they let reality gently pass them by.

The *First Lady From Plains* (Houghton Mifflin, $17.95, 357 pp.) served her four years in the White House during the same period my husband served President Carter as Ambassador to Ireland, so I read Mrs. Carter's memoirs with nostalgia. She was criticized (wrongly, I thought) for playing too obtrusive a role in her husband's administration; her book clearly shows a woman with keen political insight, fierce loyalty, and an intellectual curiosity that would never be satisfied on the tea-party, bridge-game circuit. She was the kind of helpmate that many wives of public figures try to be, rejoicing over victory, agonizing over decisions, angry over defeat. Her book is candid and lively, and filled with fascinating details of important events. The section that deals with the minute-by-minute negotiations of the Camp David peace talks has the breathtaking suspense of a mystery novel.

I can't remember laughing so hard for so long as I did while reading the first chapter of *The Commissar's Report*, a second novel by Martyn Burke (Houghton Mifflin, $14.95, 315 pp.). Nor will I ever be able to take "Communist intrigue" quite so seriously again, after getting to know Dimitri, an engaging young Communist with strong capitalist leanings and a passion for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Dimitri is sent to the U.S. to spy for the Kremlin, and his troubles begin when his wife insists on opening a charge account at Bergdorf's; his own skill and natural talent for playing the stock market get him into even deeper trouble with his bosses back in Red Square. It's a funny, fast-paced satire which makes the Cold War look, for once, just plain silly.

Jacques Maritain

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John Calvin Batchelor

JOHN CALVIN BATCHELOR *is the author of* The Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica, *a novel. His new novel,* American Falls, *will be published next fall.*

RICHARD MARIUS'S biography, *Thomas More* (Knopf, $22.95, 562 pp.) is easily the most exciting book of the year. This is not a man for all seasons, but rather a man who excelled in his own time, who served his king and his country with the same vigor with which he honored his faith, and who must stand today as one of the central windows through which we can see the sixteenth century. Marius writes boldy and colorfully, and with a talent that brings the tension of the novel to a story one had thought was polished into apocrypha by four centuries of sycophants. Thomas More was heroic, despite the times, despite himself, and despite some bizarre bad luck. And this book is astonishing in its ability to present a portrait of Thomas More that is of equal weight and beauty with the one by Holbein in the Frick Collection.

Strobe Talbott's *Deadly Gambits* (Knopf, $17.95, 380 pp.) is the detailed account of the Reagan administration's four-year effort in nuclear arms control. It is shocking like nothing one has seen since the Pentagon Papers. And it reads like a grand Russian novel, without heroes and heroines. Also it is not only for experts, or scholars, or the mailing list of *Foreign Affairs* magazine. It is for every informed citizen. What has this country created? A war between the State Department and the Defense Department. A nuclear arsenal that is militarily useless and diplomatically pointless. And a situation in which the hard-liners in Washington have more in common with their opposite numbers in Moscow than they do with the so-called peaceniks in New York or Europe. Strobe Talbott is a first-rate patriot. He has written a book that will become a classic.

John Gardner and John Maier's *Gilgamesh* (Knopf, $18.95, 304 pp.) is a curiosity that greatly enhances one's reading of all extant myth. John Gardner is said to have completed his work on this retranslation just weeks before his death in 1982. John Maier, a lecturer in theology and an Assyriologist, has included an excellent introduction to the text, in which he discusses not only the scholarly work here, but also the emotional effort necessary to carry on with this worthy project after Gardner's death. As for the poem itelf, the story is amazing, and this is certainly the way for one to reacquaint

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oneself as well as introduce oneself to the oldest existing heroic tragedy.

Marie Ponsot

MARIE PONSOT *is the author of a collection of poems,* Admit Impediment *(Knopf), and, with Rosemary Deen, of* The Common Sense, *which Boynton/Cook will publish this spring. Her next book of poetry,* Love is not Love, *is forthcoming.*

WE MAY never rid political talk of the cosmetic persuasiveness that infects our ears. To save language from it, the remedy of choice is poetry: real ideas undivided from the speaker's real voice expressing them. Though poetry is barely advertised, rarely reviewed, and scarce in bookstores, I hunt it out, for its dearest freshness restores words to meaning.

Here are some books that have come to my rescue in 1984. An old favorite: the *Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Little, Brown, 1960, $15, 770 pp.) — an essential, always astonishing American voice ("Image of light, adieu/thanks for the interview"). And a new one: H.D.'s *Collected Poems 1912-1944* (New Directions, 1983, $35, 629 pp.). Here H.D., the worst-anthologized modernist poet, shows her stuff. Hers is an ear more subtle than Pound's, Moore's, or Yeats's; her syllabic interplay and exploitation of line-breaks teach us to listen, to value each word as it speeds or impedes lines full of dramatic movement. I note that this volume contains over 300 pages from unpublished manuscripts and books long out of print. They show her mind and its reach, her brave spirit, and what she knew of the world that required her to persist in courage. Her case for personal concerns strengthens as public concern informs them.

Very different, and equally salutory, is the smashing new *Introducing Eavan Boland: Poems* (Persea Books, 225 Lafayette St., N.Y. 10012, $5.95, 71 pp.). In these selections from Boland's several recent books, the strong Irish current that invigorates all English literature breaks free. Boland's range is broad and

GRAHAM GREENE

In the winter of 1976, Graham Greene was invited to Panama by Omar Torrijos, the charismatic general who had taken power in 1968. This book is an account of that visit and the special friendship that continued through subsequent visits. The extraordinary Torrijos—complex, courageous, deeply democratic and profoundly human—emerges as one of the most fascinating characters in all of Greene's books.

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Neither nostalgia nor politics can explain the bizarre relationship—almost an infatuation—that was to develop between the English writer and the Panamanian general. Perhaps Greene recognized Torrijos as a figure so complex and contradictory that he belonged in fiction." —*Alan Riding, The New York Times Book Review*

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canny. Her perception, her notions, her questions move together. They confabulate poems that are clear, coherent, and true to what we all know of mental life where there is no categorical hiatus between inner and outer vision. A set of "Tirades" is especially fine, rampant, and complex. Boland addresses "The Mimic Muse" in one of them: ". . . You fled the housework and the battering . . . the lives that famish for your look of love . . . the world you could have sheltered in your skirts . . ." Nothing in these poems is skimped or skimmed. They are the real thing.

Access to radical sources of such deep-structured Irish fluency widened this year, with Seamus Heaney's *Sweeney Astray, a Version from the Irish* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, $13.95, 85 pp.). This medieval story of a seventh-century king cursed to madness for killing an acolyte moves in dialogue, monologue, narrative — stanzaic or free — bridged by prose. Heaney does them all justice, as in the famous passage in praise of trees ("The holly rears its windbreak/a door in winter's face"); or in his version of the lines framing the poem's best-known image: "The heart's needle is an only daughter." Here as elsewhere Heaney's language has kinetic power, vowels and consonants that swell and jostle, moving words in the mind and the throat too. The art is that the pleasure of this, like Heaney's wit, is never for its own sake but serves — to extend and discover, to give us back our language fit to use.

Irving Louis Horowitz

IRVING LOUIS HOROWITZ *is Hannah Arendt professor of sociology and political science at Rutgers University, and editor-in-chief of* Transaction/Society. *His most recent works are* Winners and Losers, *and* C. Wright Mills: An American Utopian.

A COMMON, shared experience among people who receive many books is to separate quickly, and often accurately, the nuggets of gold from mounds of stone. The task is easier than it might seem at first; since by segregating out anthologies, texts, readers, reprints, workbooks, and the like, the remaining "good pile" shrinks with astonishing rapidity. In the case of the social sciences, forewarnings of impending doom have proven to be quite in error. It is true that the center of gravity has shifted from strict formal treatises within well-established sub-fields, to wild and at times innovative cross-overs. Appropriately enough, 1984 has been the year in which social sciences rediscovered the moral sciences. Not since the great European contributions of Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Roberto Michels, Georges Sorel, Weber and the like, have we seen so many new books focus sharply and unashamedly on moral consequences and social causes; and yes, moral causes and social consequences. We are finally getting a fine-tuned social examination of moral choices and dilemmas. The texture of this writing, no less than in its substance, also adds up to a kind of literature of grace and manners that has, to put it mildly, not always been the stock in trade in social science writing.

A book of extraordinary intelligence is Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Harvard University, $29.50, 613 pp). While the book is rich in tables, appendices, and figures, ultimately the full weight of the book rests on the relationships between economic and social conditions and the universe of life styles such conditions generate. This political economy of cultural goods is blessedly devoid of the sort of snobbism and elitism one might associate with the title. Indeed, underneath the plethora of distinctions and stratifications is an old-fashioned American-type populism — one which must be terribly new in Mitterrand's France.

In the same category is Peter C. Sederberg's *The Politics of Meaning: Power and Explanation in the Construction of Social Reality* (University of Arizona, $22.50, 294 pp.). The work shows how we endow our political polarities with meaning. Absolutistic illusions and ideological opposites survive as sanctions for the decline of meaning. In such a world, of individuation and atomization, Sederberg argues the case for a humane approach to politics, art, and culture, without forgetting the coercive features of culture. The end, a world of ethical action in the absence of moral absolutes, is a bit thin; and is perhaps to be worked out later. But at least the book is on the right track.

Judith N. Shklar's *Ordinary Vices* (Harvard University, $16.50. 268 pp.), is a "ramble through a moral minefield" of the social and political functions of "cruelty, hypocrisy, snobbery, and treachery." The Harvard group is perhaps too fixated on particular forms of ambiguous maladies, i.e., lying, cheating, despair. But it is Shklar's great virtue to get beyond easy slogans of "private vices and public virtues" and see how, in the larger polity what in individuals is held to be abhorrent behavior becomes perfectly acceptable and even sanctioned behavior in the commonweal. Betrayal and trust, coercion and consensus, all commingle in a plural moral world of subcultures. Curiously enough, with Shklar, no less than Sederberg and Bourdieu, one detects a grudging respect for liberalism — living with uncertainty and anti-systems, rather than creating perfect futures.

Barrington Moore's *Privacy: Studies and Cultural History* (M.E. Sharpe, $25.00, 328 pp.) is vintage Moore: history made modern through our identifiable issues: public and private in classical Athens, ancient Chinese notions of the public and private. But through it all, Moore's concerns are quite modern: the technological threat to privacy, and the bureaucratic threat to dignity. Moore, too, after years of wandering about radical outposts, comes down hard and clear and on the side of pluralism, liberalism, and moral judgment in a world of choices. Moore's context is global rather than national. His work is also glaringly fragmented, but what fragments!

The final book I recommend is Thomas C. Schelling's *Choice and Consequence* (Harvard University, $20.00, 363 pp.). Here is the consumate gamesman of the New Frontier coming to terms with all there is beyond the game: ethics

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of policy, contest for self-command, inflicting costs willfully, and a panoply of pieces on nuclear conflict. Schelling's book is infused with philosophical wisdom, not whiz kid aphorisms. He now realizes that policy judgments are easier to come by the farther we are from our goals. The human mind becomes a source of his new liberalism: filled with annoying dissonances, at least it is trying to help. The mind wanders, fantasizes, daydreams. Schelling is not sure whether mind or body is in charge, and ends by caring less. The human will was formerly an embarrassment to the social scientists. Now it is seen as its crowning achievement. This is an elegant series of reappraisals, well worth pondering.

Looking over these selections, I note with astonishment that three of the five titles are published by Harvard, and a fourth author, Barrington Moore, is lecturer emeritus at Harvard. This is neither the place nor time to explain this localism — perhaps the impact of Rawls, Nozick, and Bok has had a more immediate than a global impact. Certainly, Arthur Rosenthal, the peripatetic director of Harvard Press, deserves credit for knowing a good book and a joyful read. Whatever the explanation, the fact seems to be that social science and moral discourse have rediscovered each other — to the greater glory of literary style and substance.

Russell McCormmach

RUSSELL McCORMMACH, *author of* Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist *(Harvard University Press), is a free-lance historian and writer living in Eugene, Oregon.*

LITERATURE that holds up to light one of the darkest sides of our century, racism, has recently received three eloquent additions. Two of these are novels: in *A Gathering of Old Men* (Vintage Books, paperback, $3.95, 216 pp.), set in a small community in the post-segregation South of the 1970s, the American writer Ernest J. Gaines exposes the deep scars and the lingering hatreds inflicted by racism, but also the quiet gains since its legal defeats in the 1960s; in *July's People* (Viking Press, $10.95, 160 pp.), the South African writer Nadine Gordimer looks to a future in which South African whites, seeking refuge from a black armed revolution in a small, rural black community, can no longer find refuge from the destructive effects of racial injustice on human relationships and on self-perception and self-esteem. The third work, *Schindler's List* (Penguin Books, paperback, $5.95, 398 pp.) by the Australian writer Thomas Keneally, a factual account written as fiction, takes us to Nazi-occupied Poland during World War II, into a Jewish community undergoing physical annihilation.

The subject of these works is somber, but the books are graced with the literary artistry of the three writers, with compassion and humor, and above all with their deep, moral concern for our times. Gaines, Gordimer, and Keneally are not easy on their readers. They remind us that the society that is harboring and abetting racism in one form or another, in one place or another, is one in which we too play a role. But they are storytellers, not preachers: to engage us in their concerns, they portray human experience and character in all their variety.

One might say that the subject of racism demands of writers that they present their characters not only through their inner and private lives, but also in their relationships to their community and the larger society; that is, through the widest possible experience. Racism, whether it is state policy as it was in Nazi Germany and still is in South Africa, or whether it survives only in the attitudes and behavior of certain groups in a society such as ours, by its intrusive, dehumanizing nature links the public world with the private. There is no aspect of the life of the victim of racism, public or private, that is not violated. Under the extreme conditions of the ghetto and the concentration camps that Keneally describes, the Jews could scarcely be said to have private

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lives, and their public lives were reduced to the precarious existence conveyed by their slogan, "An hour of life is still life." Relationships between blacks and whites, even where they are good, are tainted, maybe even ultimately impossible. Gaines' novel turns on what would under different circumstances have been the love of a young white woman for her black foster father. In the 1970s Louisiana setting of his story, however, the white woman's love can only be felt as patronizing protectiveness, which her black foster father must reject. "That old man is free of you now," she is told. "When he pulled your hands off his arm . . ., he was setting both of you free." In *July's People*, the liberal, white, former employers of the black servant July are made to recognize that it is not they who are his "people," but his family and fellow villagers.

That three of today's finest writers from three continents have devoted their talents to the subject points not only to the universality of racism, but as well to a universal acknowledgment of the evil — and, for this reason, to hope.

Evelyn Eaton Whitehead

EVELYN EATON WHITEHEAD *is a developmental psychologist. Through Whitehead Associates, she and her husband, theologian James D. Whitehead, serve as consultants in education and ministry. Their most recent book is* Seasons of Strength: New Visions of Adult Christian Maturing *(Doubleday).*

TWO trends enliven the conversation among developmental psychologists these days and invite the reader's interest as well. The first is the increased availability of information based on research into women's development. The systematic study of normal women is relatively recent, but the past decade has seen a number of serious projects brought to completion. Gradually the findings of these pioneer studies are making their way beyond a limited professional audience to the general reader. A significant contribution here is *Life Prints* (New American Library, $8.95, xii & 291 pp.), written by researchers Grace Baruch and Rosalind Barnett with journalist Caryl Rivers. Baruch and Barnett examined the "sense of well-being" in three-hundred women between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-five. A variety of lifestyles was represented: women who had not married as well as married women and those recently divorced; women with children and those without; employed women and homemakers. The lives of these women call into question much of what passes for fact in both the stereotypes of "common sense" and the prevailing categories of developmental theory. An additional benefit, the book is a delight to read.

In *Intimate Strangers* (Harper Colophon, $5.95, xi & 222 pp.) Lillian Rubin continues her already substantial contribution to our understanding of the lives of normal women (and men). Drawing from both case material and psychological theory, she explores critical sex-role and gender differences that can lead to strains in relationships between men and women.

A second trend is the effort to make connections among the diverse theoretical perspectives that currently ground development research. Earlier attempts to deal with this diversity frequently took the form of "they are really saying the same thing." Those working for synthesis today are more cautious. There is ready acknowledgment that, while research within the discipline is focused on the same phenomenon — i.e., the process of human maturation and change, researchers proceed from significantly different starting points in the pursuit of significantly different questions. Two of the finest recent efforts of synthesis have been provided by psychologists themselves involved in notable theoretical work. Using the perspectives of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg as his starting points, in *The Evolving Self* (Harvard University Press, $10.95, xv & 318 pp.) Robert Kegan presents a comprehensive theory of personal development that overcomes the conventional dichotomies of thinking and feeling, individual and group, continuity and change. James Fowler's new book *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (Harper and Row, $11.95, 128 pp.) includes an analysis of the contributions of Erik Erikson, Carol Gilligan, and Daniel Levinson as part of the application of his own theory of faith development to the Christian experience.

In *The Life Cycle Completed* (Norton, $10.95, 108 pp.) Erik Erikson offers a readable review and up-date of his influential theory of personality development through the life span, giving particular consideration to the significance of mature age.

Finally, I move beyond the development focus to recommend *The War over the Family: Capturing the Middle Ground* (Doubleday Anchor, $7.95, ix & 252 pp.), Brigitte Berger and Peter Berger's provocative analysis of the social forces that have turned "the family" into a public issue capable of polarizing the nation.

Richard E. Hage

RICHARD E. HAGE *is the coordinator of national technical assistance programs in the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, which supplies information on methods and techniques of economic development to states and local areas.*

THE BOOKS that stimulated my thinking this past year have to do with economic development, urban creativity, and personal power. Jane Jacobs was unabashedly iconoclastic in her first major work, some twenty years ago, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. At the time it aroused the wrath of most city-planners, but changed their appreciation (and the public's) for the fine-grained reality of large cities. In her latest book, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life* (Random House, $17.95, 257 pp.), she makes the challenging argument that the earnings of advanced cities are being diverted through capital exports to inert regional and national economies. These capital exports are what she calls the "transactions of decline." Her thesis discomforts both the

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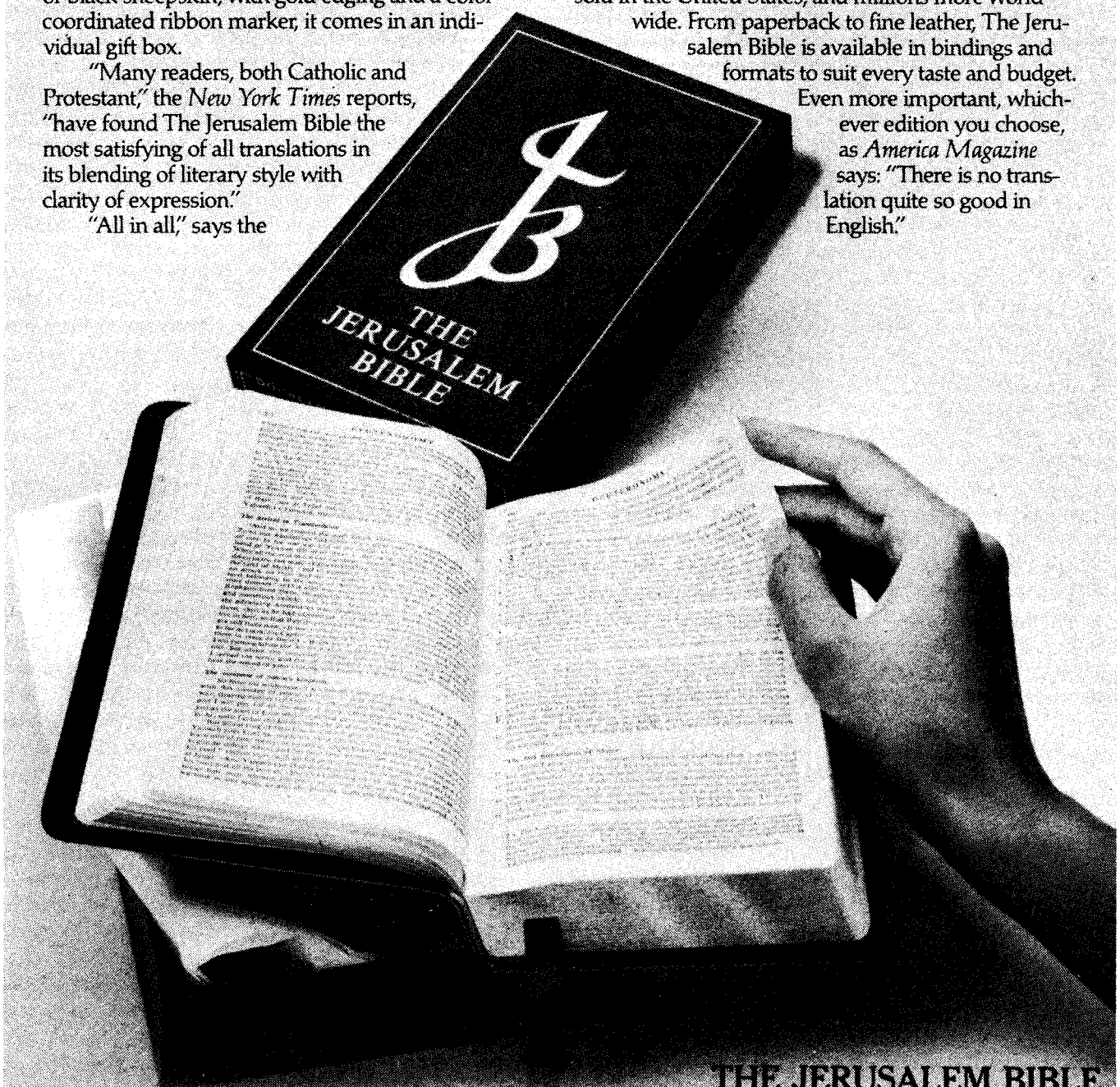

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right and the left: decline results from a nation's unremitting and heavy military production, and from unremitting grants and subsidies by a nation to poorer regions. She also challenges the private sector which she charges with draining the capital of prospering cities through investment in non-dynamic areas. Planners of today may take exception to her definition of development as "An improvisational drift into unprecedented kinds of work that carry unprecedented problems, then drifting into improvised solutions, which carry unprecedented work carrying unprecedented problems. . . ." I think this opens another debate, this time on economics, and it will be useful to have the mayors joining the argument with the economists.

With my residue of negative feelings from the 1960s, I had trouble picking up Robert A. Caro's *The Path to Power*, the first of a planned three-volume work, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (Alfred A. Knopf, $19.95, $9.95 paper, 882 pp.). And, if anything, the negative feelings are reinforced. Yet it is good reading as was Caro's first work, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. By the age of thirty-two, in 1940, Johnson had achieved real power, coupling New Deal Washington with his Congressional district and by 1940, all of Texas. His path to national power was well paved with dams, roads, military installations, and rural electrification. Caro gives a great deal of space to describing the causes and conditions of the poverty of Johnson's native hill country, and one is struck that so much of the United States was so recently like the poorer regions of today's developing countries. There was, most notably, the total reliance on human and animal power to do the plowing and the wash. The physical improvements, particularly electricity, have of course eased life in the hill country; but there has not been much economic development that is indigenous and permanent. Relative to the rest of the United States, the people are still poor. Perhaps Jane Jacobs would have something to say about such a region.

We do not have to wait for Caro's next volumes on Johnson to know that the era of unprecedented growth for the U.S. and the world following World War II was coming to an end by the time he stepped down from power in 1969. Moreover, we are all too aware that during this period, other nations such as Japan were growing and in some areas, surpassing the U.S. What we may be more dimly aware of is that the developing countries were doing just that: developing. Many have moved from import-substitution strategies to exporting, not only labor-intensive goods, but also the internationally competitive capital-intensive goods. I found Jacques Loup's *Can the Third World Survive?* (Johns Hopkins, $25, $8.95 paper, 244 pp.) to be authoritative yet readable and imaginative. His brief overview of the period from World War II to the end of the 1960s and his description of the international economic and political turmoil since then is informative and insightful. There remain significant gaps between the developed and the developing nations, but there has also been remarkable progress. It may be that lumping the developing countries together is a disservice to our understanding, for it hides the much less significant progress of the regions of sub-Sahara Africa and the subcontinent of India. Loups takes the position that there is no dichotomy between the goals of growth and those of social justice, and argues for pursuing goals of improving productivity over welfare. While he is not sanguine about the future, he does think the "miracles" of places such as Korea are replicable; that they come from intelligent economic policies and a few entrepreneurs and their "animal spirits."

Margaret R. Miles

MARGARET R. MILES *is associate professor of historical theology and Chair of the Department of Theology, Harvard Divinity School. She is the author of* Augustine on the Body *(Scholar's Press);* Fullness of Life: Historical Foundations for a New Asceticism *(Westminster); and* Image as Insight: A Hermeneutic of Visual Understanding *(forthcoming in 1985, Beacon Press).*

THREE superb books combine educated historical imagination with scholarly interpretation of historical documents to present lively narratives of "ordinary" (for lack of a better word) historical people. *The Return of Martin Guerre* and *The Cheese and the Worms* document their sources carefully and discuss throughout their methods of discovery and interpretation. *The Name of the Rose* is more novelistic, omitting documentation, but it too presents the author's prodigious knowledge of medieval literature. Each of these books provides a rich reading experience, an experience that requires for full enjoyment a cold winter evening, a comfortable chair before a blazing fire, and a glass of wine. Each offers a great deal of instruction in historiography and hermeneutics, but the reader is not aware of being instructed; rather she/he is absorbed, along with the author, in untangling the complex human situations presented.

In *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Harvard University, $5.95 paper, 162 pp.), Natalie Zemon Davis weaves a compelling tale of the puzzling case of Martin Guerre from court records and from a popular book written by one of the judges of the case. "What I offer you here," Davis writes in the Introduction, "is in part my invention, but held tightly in check by the voices of the past." From these voices, she reconstructs a tale of mistaken identity, intense conflict in a sixteenth-century community, strong emotions, and cruelly difficult choices. An abandoned wife, a soldier who returns after many years claiming to be her husband, and a second man who returns and is recognized, albeit reluctantly, as the disagreeable and impotent Martin Guerre: these are the main characters in this poignant drama. In the course of telling their story, Davis gives a great deal of information about a sixteenth century French Basque village. Legal procedures, property and inheritance laws, customs, and religious ideas and attitudes are discussed extensively. Far from being annoyed at these descrip-

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tions, however, the reader is eager to learn whatever enables him/her to understand the human drama of the story. This is the most painless historical instruction one could imagine!

Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (Penguin, $15.85 paper, 177 pp.) similarly undertakes to use historical evidence often ignored by historians in order to reconstruct the complex religious and metaphysical ideas of an ordinary person. Domenico Scandella, called Menocchio, was a sixteenth century Italian miller, the father of eleven children, literate, and a voracious reader. Ginzburg traces the sources of his religious ideas in popular devotional texts, oral tradition, visual images, and the *Travels* of Sir John Mandeville, a mid-fourteenth century travelogue. Ginzburg works within the history of ideas on a historical subject whose ideas historians have not previously considered interesting or important enough to explore: a man who was burned as a heretic for the peculiar ideas he held. The pathos of Menocchio's curiosity and courage, his mental and physical pain, and his lengthy process toward condemnation and execution make this book anything but an intellectual exercise in understanding Menocchio's ideas, even though the reader learns a great deal about popular sixteenth-century intellectual life in Italy.

Late medieval cloistered monks are an unlikely subject for a best-seller, but Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (Warner Books, $4.95 paper, 611 pp.) has had an overwhelming response since its publication in English in 1983. An English Franciscan, Brother William of Baskerville, and his young scribe and disciple, Adso of Melk, have long conversations about everything from metaphysics to food in the course of investigating a series of gruesome murders in a wealthy Italian Benedictine abbey. Eco, with his scholarly knowledge of medieval philosophy and theology, has placed the religious and political ferment of fourteenth-century Italy in these conversations. They reveal the preoccupations, attitudes, and terrors of this volatile time. There are no footnotes, so the reader is never sure when the conversations are composed of quotations from actual historical authors and when they are devised by Eco to represent a medieval monk's knowledge and interests. Like the books described above, *The Name of the Rose* instructs while entertaining. The mystery is fascinating, and the discussions of philosophy, politics, and theology are interwoven so skillfully with the progression of the plot that the reader is drawn into these discussions in order to understand the plot.

Together these three books represent a new kind of historical writing. New types of documentary evidence are combed in order to find information about historical people who were undistinguished in intellectual or political achievement, the common people of history. Each author also focuses on the intricate relationships and communities that form the social context of the individuals they discuss. Moreover, whether the focus is on the social and cultural surroundings or the intellectual sources of the ideas of ordinary people, each of these authors assumes that the only adequate context of historical ideas is the human lives in which these ideas were found attractive and compelling. In working from this assumption, they depart from traditional historiography and present exciting new ways of communicating historical understanding.

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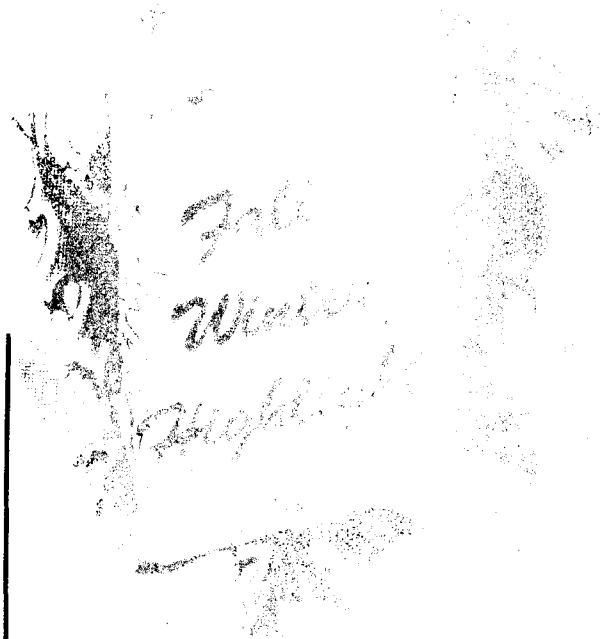

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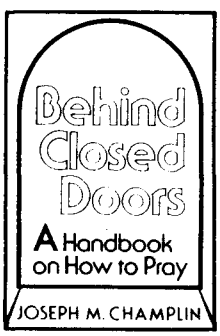

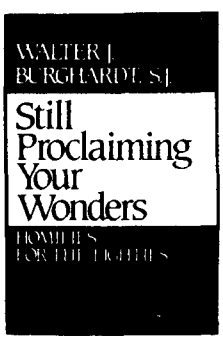

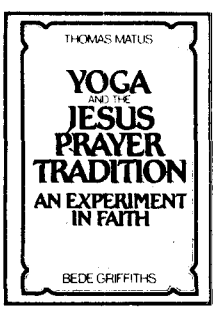

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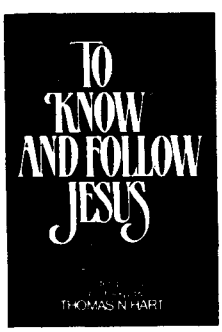

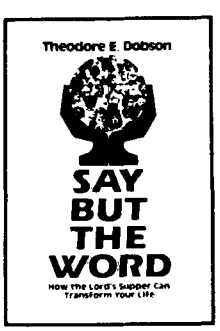

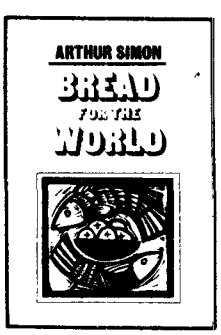

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